

**North Herts Council
BALDOCK AREA FORUM**

**Meeting held at St Marys Junior School, St Mary's Way, Baldock SG7 6HY
– Monday, 11 March at 7:30pm**

NOTES

Present:

Cllr Tom Tyson (Chair), Cllr Alistair Willoughby (Vice Chair), Cllr Steve Jarvis, Cllr Michael Muir, and Cllr Juan Cowell.

In Attendance:

Danny Pearson (Community and Partnerships Team Officer)

Also present:

At the commencement of the meeting there was 1 member of the public and 1 registered speaker. The other speaker was able to join us later.

Meeting Started at **7:33pm**

1. Chair's Announcements

Cllr Tom Tyson welcomed everyone in attendance.

- Highlighted that it's an informal, inclusive meeting to share ideas.
- Informed everyone in attendance that we would be receiving presentations from Cllr Alistair Willoughby with regards the potential changes to the Baldock Design Code, Forogh Rahmani from Hertfordshire Growth and Sergeant Lisa Perks from the North Herts Safer Neighbourhood Team.
- Members were reminded they are making recommendations and not decisions for grant applications.
- Members were reminded to make declarations of interest **before** an item they may wish to abstain from voting if they have an interest, but they are merely making recommendations and not decisions.

Apologies for absence: *Cllr Michael Weeks*

2. Public Participation – Grants

Danny Pearson, the Community and Partnership Officer, updated Members of community grant budgets.

There were no community grants presented at this meeting.

3. Presentations

PRESENTATION – Hertfordshire Growth.

A very full and informative presentation was given through verbal updates from Forogh Rahmani the Director of Hertfordshire Growth.

Hertfordshire Growth Board is the way the county is now working together to manage growth. With the Hertfordshire population expected to rise by up to 175,000 by 2031, at least 100,000 new homes and jobs will need to be created over the same period. This brings opportunities and challenges. Hertfordshire is seen as the county of opportunity. It is recognised as a great place to live, learn, invest, and work.

Hertfordshire Growth Board is ready to respond. The Growth Board is made up of Hertfordshire's 10 district and borough councils, Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership. Together they are committed to working together to deliver an ambitious growth agenda to support a thriving economy, with affordable housing, a sustainable transport network, excellent schools, and healthcare facilities.

Forogh also talked about Hertfordshire Growth Boards main objectives. These included 'building a vibrant and resilient economy for the area', 'building healthy and better-connected communities' and 'growing responsibly'.

Forogh was able to give extra information and answered the Cllrs questions. There were questions around transport and infrastructure, housing and improvement to biodiversity and access to green spaces. Engaging with the government in a more strategic way. The Save our Highstreet in Baldock was highlighted and questions on how Baldock and the surrounding villages could work more with Hertfordshire Growth Board. Opportunities around the UK Shared Prosperity Fund were discussed and how best to work together as to avoid funding duplication. Forogh welcomed Cllrs spotlighting any ideas.

The large-scale developments that are taking place in North Herts were discussed and the need for better and sufficient public transport and infrastructure was also highlighted. A member of the public asked about local EV charging points available in Baldock.

The potential impact of the local elections and expected general election were also brought up. There were discussions around how the Baldock area, along with Cllrs and community leaders, can work with Hertfordshire Growth Board

going forwards. Forogh thanked the NHC Cllrs that are already in contact with Hertfordshire Growth Board.

Forogh Rahmani looked forward to working with Cllrs and other community leaders more closely in the future and it was agreed that Hertfordshire Growth should be invited back to future forum meetings.

Cllr Tom Tyson thanked Forogh Rahmani for the presentation.

PRESENTATION – Potential changes to the Baldock Design Code

Presentation from Cllr Alistair Willoughby with regards the potential changes to the Baldock Design Code followed by Q&A.

Another very precise presentation was given verbally. Cllr Willoughby was able to present a report written by NHC officers and add in findings from his recent walkabout with them. The additional report and documents were with Cllrs in attendance and are also available on the NHC website. There were no questions from the public.

Debate followed between Cllrs.

Questions were asked about if the older benches that are due to be replaced could be donated to local groups, if suitable. This will be investigated.

Proposed by Cllr Alistair Willoughby and seconded Cllr Steve Jarvis.

Vote

Unanimous vote from the Baldock and Surrounding Villages Area Forum to recommend the changes to Baldock Design Code.

Cllr Tom Tyson thanked Cllr Alistair Willoughby for presenting the work created by NHC officers and for the Cllrs involvement thus far.

PRESENTATION – HERTFORDSHIRE POLICE

Presentation from Sergeant Lisa Perks from the North Herts Safer Neighbourhood Team followed by Q&A.

Another very full and informative presentation was given through verbal updates. Sergeant Lisa Perks was able to give extra information and answered the Cllrs, and public's, questions. Sergeant Perks highlighted the work being done in the area and the surgeries they hold in the community centre and the library. The team also still regularly visits schools. Questions around graffiti, ASB hotspots,

speeding, Tesco Extra and the crime statistics for Baldock and the surrounding areas were discussed. Statistics have been circulated to Cllrs. They are available upon request.

A request was made from Cllr Tom Tyson that figures for the Arbury ward be sent to him as soon as they were available as these were missing from the presentation.

Sergeant Perks was also able to share details about a new community messaging system called Herts Connected (which is part of the Neighbourhood Alerts system). This system replaces OWL and will become active from 1 April, 2024. To register to Herts Connected, people will need to visit: <https://hertsconnected.co.uk/> .

Apart from using the traditional call 999 approach people can also report crimes using the Echo service > [Echo community feedback | Hertfordshire Constabulary \(herts.police.uk\)](#) and Crimestoppers > [Hertfordshire - Community | Crimestoppers \(crimestoppers-uk.org\)](#)

Cllr Tom Tyson thanked Sergeant Lisa Perks for the presentation.

4. Information Note: Grants & Community Update

Danny Pearson, Community and Partnerships Team Officer, gave a presentation on the Community Update. Most of which can be seen in the report. These included:

Districtwide Community Updates

- The Community Investment Fund has now closed. Successful grant applicants have been informed.
- Coordinating voluntary support response to Asylum Seekers based in North Herts.
- The winners of the North Herts Heroes Awards were celebrated at the Chair's Civic event which took place on 1st March.
- Co-ordinating various local and district wide Network Groups including Westmill, Youth Action, Food Provision, Arts and Culture, and Green and Growing Group.
- Continuing to facilitate NHC Councillors' Community Surgeries.
- Sharing and disseminating information on social media and to mailing lists, keeping in touch with the community, voluntary, statutory, and non-statutory agencies.
- The Community Partnership Team met with the Royal British Legion and Letchworth BID to discuss this year's Letchworth Remembrance Day

Parade and how they can recruit more members from across North Hertfordshire.

- Holocaust Memorial Day hybrid event took place in the North Herts Council Chamber and can be viewed on the Council's YouTube channel.

Area Community Updates

- Community Partnerships Officer is continuing to build up connections with local groups/organisations in Baldock, including the Baldock Events Forum, The Royal British Legion - Baldock & District Branch and Baldock Library.
- Continued work with Growing Baldock.
- Over the coming months the Community Partnerships Officer will be reaching out to local groups to better connect with them. If anyone has any useful contacts / links please contact Danny.

Cllr Tom Tyson thanked the Officer for the presentation.

5. Open Discussion

A couple of questions were raised by the member of public in attendance.

When will the planning application be coming from Urban& Civic?

Cllr Tom Tyson believed that it will potential be by the back end of this year.

Potholes along Bygrave Road were also highlighted.

Cllr Michael Muir has reported these.

WARD MEMBERS UPDATES

No updates from Cllrs.

6. Topics for future Baldock & Surrounding Villages Area Forums

The Cllrs present wanted to see if the next Area Forum could take place at the Baldock community centre. The officer will investigate this as an option.

If there are any further thoughts from Cllrs, then they will discuss and send ideas to the Chair. The Chair will then bring these to the Community & Partnerships team ASAP.

Meeting closed 9:20pm