

**North Herts Council  
BALDOCK & SURROUNDING VILLAGES COMMUNITY FORUM**

**Meeting held at Baldock Community Centre, Simpson Dr, Baldock SG7  
6DH – Monday, 17th June at 7:30pm**

**NOTES**

**Present:**

*Councillor Alistair Willoughby, Councillor Rhona Cameron,  
Councillor Tom Tyson, and Councillor Stewart Willoughby*

**In Attendance:**

*Danny Pearson (Community and Partnerships Team Officer)*

**Also present:**

*At the commencement of the meeting there was 1 member of the  
public, 6 registered speakers.*

Meeting Started at **7:30pm**

**1. Chair's Announcements**

**Cllr Alistair Willoughby 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 *Balstock CIC, Bygrave Parish Council* and *Respair Therapy CIC* who are seeking grant funding.
- 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:** *Councillor Emma Rowe, Councillor Steve Jarvis, and Councillor Michael Muir.*

## 2. Public Participation – Grants

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

On the Community Forum Report, as outlined in Appendix 2, the Community Grant budget available is **£12,229**.

If the applications outlined in Appendices 3, 4, and 5 are recommended and approved, there would be **£8,029** available for Community Grants for the remainder of the 2024-25 financial year.

Presentations then took place.

**Balstock CIC** – Lynne from **Balstock CIC** presented.

**Balstock CIC** asked for **£2,000**. Balstock CIC would like to request support for the rising costs of putting the Balstock festival on, to meet the suggested requirements by the North Herts SAG, including the Police and Environmental Health Departments. Further rises have been seen in the cost for security, toilet hire, insurance, and other general running costs. Balstock CIC is a completely volunteer committee and they have worked in collaboration with local businesses to keep venue costs free to the public. They have kept their expenses at a minimum, working with other local groups to share community resources and keep costs down. They approach local companies for sponsorship to further minimise costs.

The dedication of the small volunteer committee members and on-the-day volunteers further ensures that the festival runs on a limited budget. Year on year their donations to local charities have increased, despite rising costs. To date, Balstock has raised over £80,000 for local and national causes. The event benefits the public, local community, local businesses and nominated local charities. They are aware that due to cost-of-living difficulties and socio-economic factors, many individuals and children who benefit from exposure to music can access a festival that they may not otherwise be able to afford. Research suggests that events such as this are beneficial to people's wellbeing. They estimate that over the weekend that over 5000+ residents will engage and benefit from the festival.

Word of the festival is spread using their Facebook page and posters are placed in town pubs and shops. Word of mouth, radio articles, newspaper articles, local community magazines, such as, On Our Doorstep are all also used. Balstock is an event run primarily by Baldock residents. They pride themselves in promoting local talent and local businesses. Where possible, all contractors and services used are local. Balstock benefits local artists, both established and upcoming. All artists donate their time free of charge, raising their local profile. Where possible, Balstock supports environmental and sustainable policies. Costs have significantly increased since the police requirement to fence in the High Street performance area. Balstock gives the local community a chance to come together and support

the event. For almost 20 years, Balstock has been at the heart of autumn activities within the town. Businesses work with the volunteer committee to ensure that the festival continues to thrive year on year and maintain Community Cohesion.

Lynne was able to give extra information and answered the Cllrs questions.

*Full amount to be paid proposed by Councillor Tom Tyson and seconded by Councillor Stewart Willoughby.*

### **Unanimous vote in favour of providing £2,000 to Balstock CIC**

Cllr Alistair Willoughby thanked Lynne for the presentation.

### **Bygrave Parish Council – Philip from Bygrave Parish Council presented.**

**Bygrave Parish Council** asked for **£1,000**. Bygrave Parish Council are seeking funding to help pay for a new defibrillator for the residents of Lower Bygrave. It would need to be one that requires no external power that could be accessible to most of the local residents. The 54 houses in Lower Bygrave are mainly occupied by elderly people, 65+. The statistics are alarming - Cardiac Arrest kills over 60,000 people, of all ages, in the UK each year. If a heart defibrillator is used within 3-5mins of a cardiac arrest, the chance of survival increases from 6% to a huge 74%.

All the villagers would benefit from this potential defibrillator as they are too far from Baldock town to make use of the defibrillators there. They would like to site this on the outside of the bus stop at the end of Wedon Way as being the most central and visible position. This would also be visible to the Ashwell/Bygrave Road, so it could also be used by passing cyclists and other road users if necessary. They only have the option of an unpowered unit as the cost to install a supply has been quoted as over £5,000 by UKPN. The unit costs slightly more than normal as a result. The only company they have found who will install such are Community Heartbeat.

The ongoing costs are £185 per year for support from Community Heartbeat. If this cannot be funded by the Parish Council, then the community are prepared to fundraise. They believe that Community Heartbeat will arrange for the defibrillator to be added to the national database, as well as providing training on CPR and the defibrillator at a community session which they have agreed to include in the initial £3000 cost.

They will share news of the installation using their newsletter and the parish website. This would enable a more inclusive facility for all ages in the community to know it is there when needed.

Philip was able to give extra information and answered the Cllrs questions. Questions included who would be providing the training and who would be trained to use the defibrillator.

*Full amount to be paid proposed by Councillor Stewart Willoughby and seconded by Councillor Tom Tyson.*

### **Unanimous vote in favour of providing £1,000 to Bygrave Parish Council**

Cllr Alistair Willoughby thanked Philip for the presentation.

**Respair Therapy CIC – Debbie** from **Respair Therapy CIC** presented.

**Respair Therapy CIC** asked for **£1,200**. Respair Therapy is a Community Interest Company. Their organisational structure includes four Directors, all of whom perform their duties as Directors in a voluntary capacity. The project they're seeking funding for involves providing Dance Movement Psychotherapy for adults living with profound multiple learning disabilities and/or adults living with autism with high support needs. The proposal is for weekly, one-hour group sessions for up to 10 participants (and their carers) for up to 24 weeks. This proposed service will be conducted in collaboration with existing day services catering to adults with PMLD, such as those provided at Greyslates Court in Baldock. Currently, there are no psychological therapies available as part of the current day service provision.

The primary objectives of Respair Therapy C.I.C. involves using Dance Movement Psychotherapy and Psychoeducation to enhance the well-being of the community. Dance Movement Psychotherapy (DMP) for individuals with learning disabilities is remarkably cost-effective. It improves mental health, communication, and social inclusion, reducing the need for crisis interventions and hospitalisations. DMP's holistic, person-centred approach prevents acute issues and can therefore generate long-term savings for health and social care services. Facilitator fees for this kind of work are difficult to ascertain because of the uniqueness of the offering. However, a standard session fee for facilitators with expertise in this area can range from £25 - £100 per session. They have costed the facilitator fees at £50 per session. For a group of up to 10 individuals (and their one-to-one carers) this equates to £5 per person per session.

People living with profound multiple learning disabilities and autistic people with high support needs will benefit from this activity. There will be up to 10 North Herts residents attending day services and the weekly sessions will take place at Greyslates Court. This is a day centre for people with PMLD and autistic people with high support needs.

Debbie was able to give extra information and answered the Cllrs questions. Questions included confirming the location of Greyslates Court and an idea of where its users lived.

*Full amount to be paid proposed by Councillor Alistair Willoughby and seconded by Councillor Rhona Cameron.*

**Unanimous vote in favour of providing £1,200 to Respair Therapy CIC.**

Cllr Alistair Willoughby thanked Debbie for the presentation.

### **3. Presentations**

#### **PRESENTATION – Community Health & Wellbeing Team**

Presentation from **Helen Rae**, Community Health & Wellbeing Team Leader, followed by Q&A.

A very full and informative verbal presentation and updates was given. There were questions from Cllrs which Helen was able to answer. Notes from the presentation are as follows,

#### **Community Wellbeing Team at North Herts Council**

Team delivers a range of wellbeing interventions alongside local partner organisations that aims to improve the health of local residents.

- 1 North Herts Healthy Hub – provides advice and support for residents wanting help with their health and wellbeing. Can assist residents to find local organisations that can help them and make referrals. Help includes debt and money advice, stop smoking support, weight management, emergency food support, sexual health, health checks, information on social groups and activities. Funded by Hertfordshire County Council with a top up from North Herts Council until end of March 2025.
- 2 A range of community wellbeing projects are delivered using various funding sources including the UK shared prosperity fund, health inequality funding and household support funding. These vary across the district but in and around Baldock there is:
  - Social groups at Baldock community centre with various creative activities and a cup of tea and a chat
  - Food education for families with young children at the community centre
  - Funded horticultural therapy placements for people living with mental health conditions

- A weekly low impact exercise class at the community class and from September a weekly positive movement class for people living with frailty, recovering from or wanting to prevent falls.
- A digital inclusion project providing weekly sessions for people wanting to improve their digital literacy, learn to use existing devices or receive a refurbished device. Looking for a rural venue with good wifi access that we can run this at locally.
- A food education project for adults with learning disabilities runs twice a month at the community centre for adults with a learning disability
- Looking to establish a menopause support group at the community centre
- From September, energy efficient air frying and slow cooking courses being offered in Ashwell and Baldock
- 60 families in Baldock taking part in a food box project receiving regular boxes of fresh produce and staple ingredients with recipes to try out new healthy recipes cost free

### **Update from North Herts Council Leisure and Active Communities team / Everyone Active:**

- Community Outreach – this will include low-cost accessible activities, in community settings, often with a social side after the traditional hour class, which will include tea and biscuits. Sessions tend to be ideal for seniors, preventing social isolation and support those who are too far away from a main EA centre, or would feel underconfident in setting foot in this environment. Sessions will be led by qualified, knowledgeable instructors and coaches. Example activities are: senior circuits, strength and mobility, seated yoga, gentle Zumba. We would encourage communities in Baldock to reach out to us on [northhertsactivecommunities@everyoneactive.com](mailto:northhertsactivecommunities@everyoneactive.com) to highlight what they would like to see in the area from an activity and wellbeing perspective. The team of three activity and wellbeing managers would be happy to attend meetings in person to discuss as well.

#### North Herts Leisure Centre:

- Pickleball – Starting Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> July 9.30-11.30am – all equipment provided and a level 2 coach on hand.
- Good Boost aqua natal (Fridays 12.30) and land-based sessions (Mondays 10am) – self referrals welcome -
- Escape Pain (Tuesdays 4.30pm) ideal for those with joint niggles and pains – self referrals welcome
- Walking Netball – Thursday 1pm-2pm
- Walking Football – Thursday 2pm -3pm
- This Girl Can week 24<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> June – Monday 24<sup>th</sup> Circuits 10.30am, Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> Aqua Circuits 8.15pm, Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> Yoga @ Letchworth Lido 9am
- We ran a successful open day on the 1<sup>st</sup> June at NHLC and outreach in the town centre including lots of free activities. There will be another open day after the gym refurb with lots of free activities for all to enjoy.

Coming soon:

- Walking Tennis at NHLC Thursday 3pm-4pm (to complete an afternoon of walking sports with an afternoon community café taking place throughout as well.)
- Badminton no strings / senior sessions in the daytime
- Junior and adult basketball sessions

Cllr Alistair Willoughby thanked Helen for the presentation.

## **PRESENTATION – Baldock Library**

Presentation from **Georgina Harper-Dennett**, Baldock Library Manager, followed by Q&A.

A very full and informative verbal presentation and updates was given. There were questions from Cllrs which Georgina was able to answer. Updates about the what the library had to offer and the library's future plans were discussed. The Cllrs praised Georgina, and her team, for all the work they do for the town.

Cllr Alistair Willoughby thanked Georgina for the presentation.

## **4. 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**

- Under Delegated Decision the action was made to change Area Forums to Community Forums.
- Member inductions have taken place where the Community & Partnerships team had the opportunity to introduce themselves to new members.
- Co-ordinating various local and district wide Network Groups including Youth Action, Food Provision, Arts and Culture and Green and Growing Group.
- Coordinating voluntary support response to Asylum Seekers based in North Herts.
- Continuing to facilitate NHC Councillors' Community Surgeries.
- Police support at all NHC Councillors' Community Surgeries has been arranged.

- Sharing and disseminating information on social media and to mailing lists, keeping in touch with the community, voluntary, statutory, and non-statutory agencies.
- Due to the huge success of last year's Youth Showcase event, we are again working with Hitchin Rotary Club to help deliver a second Youth Showcase event in Hitchin.
- Team members worked with North Herts & Stevenage CVS and Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation to deliver the 'All About Us' community conference.
- Letchworth has achieved 'Bee Friendly' status with the work done by our contractors John O'Conner's. The bee corridor can now be extended into other towns.

### **Area Community Updates**

- Discussions around Baldock Community Centre as the lease of centre has reached its contractual expiry date.
- Working with the Baldock Festival CIC before and during the Baldock Festival.
- Promoting the Healthy Hub teams activities taking place in Baldock.
- Helping to replace the flagpole at the war memorial.
- The North Herts Neighbourhood Policing Team (NPT) have announced their new policing priorities for the coming months. They will be tackling ASB, particularly in and around the garage block backing on to Chiltern Road through youth engagement and speeding along Weston Way.
- Working with the Living Theatre company to see if they can deliver workshops to Baldock schools.
- Working with the Baldock Methodist Church.
- Ward walks with new Local Councillors to be arranged.

Cllr Alistair Willoughby thanked the Officer for the presentation.

### **5. Open Discussion**

**Georgina Harper-Dennett**, Baldock Library Manager, invited Cllrs to hold Cllr Community surgeries at the library if they wanted. Cllr said this could be possible and will ask other Cllrs their thoughts. Danny Pearson suggested they could combine with the Police surgeries. This too will also be investigated.



## 6. WARD MEMBERS ACTIVITIES

Councillor Tom Tyson – Brought to the Forums attention the issues caused by the recent Cereals event that took place at Burgrave Woods. The main issue was the traffic.

Councillor Rhona Cameron – Wanted to let the Forum know that she, along with several Cllrs, will be meeting with Affinity Water. She also found the work being done around Digital Inclusion interesting.

Councillor Stewart Willoughby – Not a lot to report currently as still new in the role. Currently listening to residents' concerns.

Councillor Alistair Willoughby – Thanked everyone for their contributions and was excited for the Balstock Festival.

## 7. Topics for future Baldock & Surrounding Villages Community Forum

**CHAIR** asked for suggestions for future topics for discussion and possible future venues in Baldock. The next Community Forum is planned for September 9<sup>th</sup>.

Suggested venue of St Marys is to be explored for the September meeting. It was agreed that the meetings in December and March should be at the Baldock Community Centre again, if possible. This will be explored by the Area Officer.

Noted that 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.

Cllr Alistair Willoughby thanked everyone for coming and called the meeting to a close.

**Meeting closed 8:50pm**