

**North Herts Council
BALDOCK & DISTRICT COMMUNITY FORUM**

**Meeting held at Baldock Community Centre
On Monday 3 March 2025 at 7.30pm**

NOTES

Present: Cllr Alistair Willoughby (Chair) (AW), Cllr Emma Rowe (Vice Chair) (ER), Cllr Rhona Cameron (RC), Cllr Steve Jarvis (SJ), Cllr Tom Tyson (TT) and Cllr Stewart Willoughby (SW).

Absent: Cllr Michael Muir (MM)

In attendance:

Claire Morgan (Community and Partnerships Team Leader) (CM), Tracy Westgate (Community Partnership Officer) (TW), Anna Bradley (Senior Town Centre Project Manager) (AB) PS Ryan Champion (Neighbourhood Policing Team) (PSRC), Danny Kingston (Activity & Wellbeing Manager Everyone Active) (DK), Paul Mumford (Urban & Civic) (PM).

Also present:

At the commencement of the meeting there were 4 members of the public (MOP), including the 3 registered speakers.

Meeting Started at **19:30**

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

2. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Cllr A Willoughby welcomed everyone in attendance.

He highlighted that the Forum is an informal, inclusive meeting to share ideas.

Cllr A Willoughby gave an overview of The Community Governance Review that will launch on 14th March 2025.

The proposals are an amendment to the electoral cycle so that scheduled parish elections are held on the same year as the district council elections. For some parishes there are proposals to change boundaries and / or the number of parish councillors. There is also the suggestion to establish new town councils for Hitchin, Letchworth and Baldock.

Cllr A Willoughby gave an overview of the sustainability Strategy Consultation.

The survey gives the opportunity to people to give their thoughts on reducing council emissions, reducing emissions in North Herts, adapting to climate change and increasing biodiversity. The consultation is running until 5pm on 31 March.

3. ECO FLEX

Cllr A Willoughby gave an overview of the ECO Scheme which will hopefully allow more residents to be eligible for funding for insulation and heating. For residents living in hard to heat, poorly insulated homes, there are three routes to qualify which relate to: household income, having a medical referral or proof of having someone vulnerable to the cold living at the house.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN RELATION TO GRANT APPLICATION

The Community Partnerships officer informed those present that there is £362 available in the Baldock & District grant budget.

There were no Grant Applications presented at this meeting.

5. BALDOCK BENCHES CONSULTATION – (AB)

Anna Bradley the senior Town Centre Project Officer for NHC presented details of the Baldock Benches Consultation.

- It has been running for 4 weeks
- 80/85 responses received, mainly positive
- Q (TT) – What were the negative responses
- A (AB) – in relation to anti-social behavior in certain locations, but benches needed at regular intervals for people with reduced mobility
- Q(CM) – Were the requirements of the Charter Fair taken into consideration?
- A (AB) – Yes
- A (AW) – current benches are being moved to accommodate the Fair so this and access to utilities were taken into consideration.
- Q (ER) – what was the feedback regarding seats (no backs) instead of benches (with backs)?
- A (AB) – Feedback suggests people prefer benches over seats, so this might be moderated.
- Q (RC) – Who is responsible for the maintenance?

- A (AB) – Herts County Council. The new benches and seats will require significantly less maintenance than the existing benches and should last for in the region of 25 years.
- (AW) Thanked (AB) for her work and stated how pleased he is that people will be able to come into town and enjoy the town centre without needing to spend any money.

6. **PRESENTATION – ACTIVE COMMUNITIES (DK)**

Appendix I contains a copy of DK's notes.

The main take aways were affordable classes being held in village locations and the special provisions in place for people suffering from Parkinson Disease.

- Q (SJ) – How do you promote the Community Outreach events?
- A (DK) – Posters and campaign materials posted locally to the events and venues.
- Q (TT) –Is there capacity for more events
- A (DK) – There are 2 in the pipeline and more on the way.
- Q (SJ) – as the results of the survey were skewed towards the elderly, what are you doing to find out more across the younger age ranges?
- A (DK) – The 31/50 age group accounted for 22% of the 'clicks' but the 16/30 age group only accounted for 4%. We are looking at ways to address that.
- Q (RC) – Have you considered making transport available to facilities like the swimming pool?
- A (DK) – No, but there are local charities that can assist.
- (AW) Noted – There is a Community Minibus in Baldock that could collect people from the Villages.
- Q (RC) – Do you know anywhere locally that provides Hydrotherapy?
- A (DK) – No, but he will look into it.

7. **PRESENTATION - POLICE SAFER NEIGHBOURHOODS TEAM (PSRC)**

Appendix II contains a copy of PSRC's notes.

The main take away was that although some of the statistics appear to be significantly higher than last year, this is driven by better recording of certain crimes.

- Balstock went very well apart from one stage being erected the wrong way round. This was resolved very quickly with no fuss.
- (TT) – Thanked PSRC for bringing the Arbury figures.

- Q (TT) – Queried was the overall 25% increase in figures covered by the extra push on reporting?
- A (PSRC) – Yes. The Peel review discovered there was significant under recording of certain types of crimes so there is increased focus in these areas.
- (PM) – Requested to speak with PSRC the two Baldock Officers (Sam & Shelly) regarding priorities.
- Q (MOP) – Will the proposed 20mph restrictions be policed?
- A (PSRC) – They will not be fully policed, only to the level current speed restrictions are.
- Q (AW) – Raised the speeding in Clothall Rd outside Hartsfield School.
- A (PSRC) – Will take this away. Also noted it is helpful if residents fill in surveys that highlight these things.
- Q (RC) – Does the crime of littering feature in the figures of the report provided?
- A (PSRC) – Fly tipping is recorded in the report, but not normal littering. Police Officers (Sam and Shelly) would deal with it if they see it.
- Q (MOP) – Regarding fly tipping, there is some the Bygrave Road side of the station bridge.
- A (PSRC) – there is a dedicated site this can be reported on. If it is being witnessed 'live' call 999.

8. COMMUNITY UPDATE (TW)

(TW) presented the Community update as submitted with the papers for the meeting.

- (PM) Requested to be added to the Baldock community Breakfast then the Group is set up. (TW) to action.
- (CM) noted the Herts Heros Awards are available on YouTube.
- (TT) noted there is concern where Grant Applicants apply in different Forums that it is not always know able across each Forum.
- (CM) noted there is no facility to apply for a District wide grant, so it is up to the individual Forums to decide if to support that application for their area. Each area has different priorities. It will however be reflected in the report if more than one Forum is receiving an application.

9. WARD MEMBERS ACTIVITIES, WARD MATTERS & OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

(PM) from Urban and Civic provided an update on Growing Baldock.

The Strategic Masterplan is with Council. There is a three-step approval process and they will be targeting the first full council meeting after the election. The aim is to submit the planning application in the Autumn. Then it will probably take approx.

1 year to process and put the S106 agreement in place. They anticipate being 'on site' from 2027.

It was felt there was momentum in the Baldock Conversation in 2023, but as we have spent a year talking about the school, the discussion needs reinvigorating. This Forum should be a part of that. There will be another large-scale consultation event set up and the Growing Baldock Advisory Forum will feed into this.

- Q (TT) – Is there one single plan for the entire project?
- A (PM) – Two applications but the outline covers all.
- The design code might not be agreed before BA2 is being progressed, but it will be taken into consideration.
- The S106 is just at the U & C level, not at the individual builder's level.
- (AW) confirmed U & C will be responsible for the infrastructure, bigger roads (non-estate roads), HCC will be responsible for the school(s).
- The design specification needs to be agreed by County for County to adopt the roads.
- There was discussion regarding the carbon cost of making the roads to the standard they would need to be to be adopted, or the off set of reduced carbon emissions if the roads are smaller and narrower.
- Q (TT) – Has the water supply been looked at?
- A (PM) – Affinity are the drinking water supplier they have said they have arrived at a solution, but there is no information as yet. Anglian Water are responsible for the sewage.
- Houses need to be designed with greater water efficiency. UK use approximately 150 litres of water per person per day. This needs to be reduced.
- Q (TT) – Is the water supply going to be difficult?
- A (PM) – In the short term yes, but longer term there will be water from the West, water from Grafham and two new reservoirs and a water credit system, which will be similar to the carbon off setting system.
- Q (SJ) – Will the highways and other open spaces be discussed at S106.
- A (PM) – This will be in the masterplan.
- Q (AW) - Can Baldock Mound be named something else please? Spital Hill?
- A (PM) – this was previously changed from Spital Hill to Baldock Mound. Perhaps consult to public on this?
- (SJ) – In general from my experience people have moved on from 'Why is Growing Baldock happening', to 'When can we purchase a new house?'
- (AW) invited (PM) to attend Ecofest this year.

MEMBER UPDATES

- (SW) requested that everyone encourages people to complete the 20mph consultation.
- (MOP) – the web address on the 20mph consultation letter is incorrect.
- (AW) - This will be fed back to HCC.

- It was noted that in Wales some insurance premiums have decreased because of the evidence in the reduction of claims.
 - Could this be noted, as the responses in We Love Baldock have seemed mainly negative.
 - (PM) noted the speed limits in the new areas of the town will be matched to the existing scheme.
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- Q (MOP) – what is the current situation with BA4?
 - A (AW) – It is going to appeal at the end of April / beginning of May. It was for 42 homes, but only 2 would be affordable homes, but for a site that size, 17 homes should have fallen into the affordable bracket.
 - (AW) Also noted he is unsure why it is not part of Growing Baldock because it is owned by Hertfordshire County Council just like the other land that makes up Growing Baldock and Chalkdene is a company owned by Herts County Council.
 - Q (MOP) – Any update on Bygrave Solar Farm
 - A (AW) – No update
 - A (TT) – No update

ACTION – (TW / PM) to find out where the cable from the solar farm is proposed to feed back into the grid.

(AW) Fund raising for St Mary's Church Hall.

- There is a Fashion Show on May 7th.
- A Family fun day in September.
- A Quiz at Baldock Festival hosted by (ER)
- Raffle prizes are being requested.

10. TOPICS FOR FUTURE FORUMS

- June – Shared Waste Team will present on new kerbside collection that will be implemented from 4th August 2025.
- The information (AW) presented on this new scheme was not well known.
- (ER) Suggested St.Marys Church Hall Fund raising activities as a future topic.

MEETING CLOSED 21:24

APPENDIX I

Baldock Community Forum – 3rd March

- Introduction about me.

Consultation

Number of responses: 300

Ages 16-30 = 4% 31-50=22% 51-60=19% 61-69=30% 70+=25%

Time of Day – they would prefer outreach sessions

Morning = 47% Afternoon= 26% Evening = 27%

Type of Class? Pilates= 25% Yoga=25% Parent and Baby=12%

Seated Ex=2% Love to Move=7% Ex to
music=27% Other =2% Walking/ walking sports,
outdoors, Meditation

30 min of social aspect after the class (tea & biscuits)? Yes = 70% No = 30%

Community Outreach

The Active Communities work falls under the Activity and Wellbeing department and this falls under the umbrella of the charitable trust.

- **we only ever aim to cover the venue cost and the cost of the instructor to break even.**
- **In the case where we do make profit from a community class it gets put back into the community offering with new classes, equipment etc.**

-Launched 3 funded physical activity sessions - 12 weeks

- **The Grange community Centre – Buggies and Bands Class** - Tuesdays, 9-10:30

- **Whitwell Fellowship Hall – Senior Circuit Class** - Thursdays, 1:30-2:30pm

- **Weston Community centre- Senior Fitness Class** - Tuesdays, 11-12am

NEW Class at Knebworth Parish Centre – Strength and Mobility session every Friday starting in April.

SOON – Health Walks in Royston - community café

Group Memberships update

- Free Parkinsons membership which includes free core membership for the Parkinsons patient and up to three carers free of charge as well. – Currently 73
- Free memberships for cared for children and care experienced children now live. Referrals are made through the county council. – Currently 30
- Sporting Champions - a scheme helping athletes on the rise reach their potential with free access to facilities and mentoring and celebration days with top athletes / former athletes. – Applications open now

NEW ACTIVITY SESSIONS

- Beginners Pickleball – NHLC and Royston
- Active Antz under 5's relaunch
- Walking Sports – NHLC and Royston
- Senior Community Café - 3 hours of Walking sports in the main hall
- Soft play inclusive sessions Mondays 3-3:30-5:15 – relaxed, quieter, less busy environment for juniors
- Planning more junior activities – pickleball, badminton and basketball
- NEW Wheelchair Basketball at Royston every Monday with HDSF
- Home Education Swimming and Sports
- Parkinsons Pickleball – NHLC, walk football and boxercise at Royston

- Menopause Support group - Workshop to discuss symptoms– what they can do to better symptoms – nutrition, PA Etc. – Next one March 7th Hitchin, Fridays 1.00pm-3.00pm
- Escape Pain Sessions - ideal for those with joint niggles and pains – NHLC
- Exercise Referral - Referred from medical professional, then they have consultation to discuss medical conditions, goals etc. then can do any activity from the list for a 6 month concession membership – then goes to full membership after 6 months (will stay concession if senior)
- Men's Club – NHLC Men attend one session, help and advice with coping strategies in the workshops, as a result of attending workshop they get 1 month free to encourage PA
 - o Next one NHLC March 19th, Wednesday 5.30pm-6.30pm

Recent events within the Contract

- **This Girl Can Week 24th-30th June** – Delivered 8 free sessions across the contract with over 40 women and girls booked onto these sessions. Will be more this year!!
- **Open Day 1st June at NHLC and Outreach in Town Centre** – Free Activities
- **Family Day across all three sites on 21st September** - launch of new NHLC gym and New Fitness Classes, Swimming etc. lots of free Activities.
- **Health Action Day – Royston Event on 15th February** – Partners and showcase of activities/ classes at centre. Will be delivered again next year.
- **Lidos Offer throughout Summer** - Worked closely with Carers in Herts. Would like to be able to branch out and have other community groups and networks use the service next year – email at end to enquire
- **Everyone is family** - subsidised £2 bookings for families to take part in badminton and Table Tennis, swimming and soft play during the summer holidays!
- **Live longer better event at NHLC** – 12th November, in partnership with NHC, AITC, and HSP.

APPENDIX II

Baldock Area Committee Meeting
03/03/25
Crime Data

Compares 1/04/24 – 24/02/25 with 01/04/23 – 24/02/24

All Crime

Year	This Year	Last Year	% Change
Baldock	609	486	+25.3%
North Herts	6626	5487	+20.8%
County	74165	67164	+10%
Arbury	113	108	+4.6%

North Herts

Crimes per 1000 of Population – 46.65

Ave Daily Crimes – 20

Burglary Residential

Includes Dwelling and Non-Dwelling

Year	This Year	Last Year	% Change
Baldock	6	6	0%
North Herts	162	146	+11%
County	1696	1748	-3%
Arbury	5	2	+150%

North Herts

Crimes per 1000 of Population – Not available

Ave Daily Crimes – N/A

Burglary Residential-Unconnected (sheds, etc.)

Year	This Year	Last Year	% Change
Baldock	1	0	+100%
North Herts	52	46	+13%
County	910	690	+31.9%
Arbury	8	4	+100%

No crimes per 1000 of population data available currently

Burglary Business & Community

Year	This Year	Last Year	% Change
Baldock	10	10	0%
North Herts	100	91	+9.9%
County	951	1085	-12.4%
Arbury	5	5	0%

North Herts

Crimes per 1000 of Population – 0.63

Ave Daily Crimes – 0

Theft From Motor Vehicle

Year	This Year	Last Year	% Change
Baldock	11	17	-35.3%
North Herts	157	198	-20.7%
County	2468	3071	-19.6%
Arbury	8	15	-46.7%

North Herts

Crimes per 1000 of Population – 1.14

Ave Daily Crimes – 0

Robbery Personal

Year	This Year	Last Year	% Change
Baldock	2	2	0%
North Herts	44	25	+76%
County	666	615	+8.3%
Arbury	1	0	+100%

North Herts

Crimes per 1000 of Population – 0.31

Ave Daily Crimes - 0

Violence Against the Person (Victim Based)

Includes all victim based – assaults, stalking & harassment, mal comms, etc.

Year	This Year	Last Year	% Change
Baldock	300	209	+43%
North Herts	2755	2175	+26.7%
County	27769	23303	+19.2%
Arbury	29	31	-6.5%

Assaults without Injury = 142 this year. 104 last year

Assaults with Injury = 83 this year. 61 last year.

North Herts

Crimes per 1000 of Population – 19.4

Ave Daily Crimes - 8

Stalking & Harassment

Please note the different in figures is due to the improved crime recording standards of these crimes, not the number of instances that have occurred.

Year	This Year	Last Year	% Change
Baldock	75	44	+70.4%
North Herts	913	483	+89%
County	8823	4956	+78%
Arbury	12	6	+100%

North Herts

Crimes per 1000 of Population – 6.37

Ave Daily Crimes – 3

Criminal Damage/Arson

Year	This Year	Last Year	% Change
Baldock	67	60	+11.6%
North Herts	601	681	-11.7%
County	6212	6360	-2.3%
Arbury	9	9	0%

North Herts

Crimes per 1000 of Population – 4.29

Ave Daily Crimes – 2

Shoplifting

Year	This Year	Last Year	% Change
Baldock	36	67	-46.3%
North Herts	712	502	+41.8%
County	8967	7941	+12.9%
Arbury	14	4	+250%

North Herts

Crimes per 1000 of Population – 5.01

Ave Daily Crimes – 2

Drugs Possession

Year	This Year	Last Year	% Change
Baldock	10	5	+100%
North Herts	123	117	+5.1%
County	1680	1609	+4.4
Arbury	2	1	+100%

North Herts

Crimes per 1000 of Population – 0.86

Ave Daily Crimes – 0

Public Order

Year	This Year	Last Year	% Change
Baldock	28	21	+33.3%
North Herts	429	303	+41.6%
County	4777	3444	+38.7%
Arbury	10	6	+66.7%

North Herts

Crimes per 1000 of Population – 3.03

Ave Daily Crimes – 1

Possession of Offensive Weapons

Year	This Year	Last Year	% Change
Baldock	4	4	0%
North Herts	47	33	+42.4%
County	656	494	+32.8%
Arbury	0	1	-100%

North Herts

Crimes per 1000 of Population – 0.34

Ave Daily Crimes – 0