

**North Herts Council  
LETCHWORTH COMMUNITY FORUM**

**Meeting held at Letchworth Library  
On Wednesday 24 September at 7.30pm**

**Present:** Cllr Sadie Billing (SB) (Chair), Cllr Tamsin Thomas (TT) (Vice Chair), Cllr Amy Allen (AA), Cllr Tina Bhartwas (TB), Cllr David Chalmers (DC), Cllr Mick Debenham (MD), Cllr Emma Fernandes (EF), Cllr Ian Mantle (IM), Cllr Sean Prendergast (SP), and Cllr Sean Nolan (SN)

**In attendance:**  
Aimee Flack (Community and Partnerships Officer) (AF) and Cllr Laura Williams Executive Member for Local Government Reorganisation (LW)

**Also present:**  
At the commencement of the meeting there were around 30 members of the public (MOP), including registered speakers

Meeting Started at **19:32**

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Received apologies from Cllr Daniel Allen and Cllr Claire Winchester.

**2. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Cllr Billing welcomed everyone in attendance.

Highlighted that the Forum is an informal, inclusive meeting to share ideas and reminded Members to make declarations of interest before an item.

**3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN RELATION TO GRANT APPLICATION**

The Community and Partnership Officer, updated Members of community grant budgets. The Community Grant budget available is **£15,802**. The total amount of funding requested for this meeting is **£1,500**.

If the application outlined in Appendix 2 is recommended by the Forum and subsequently approved by the Executive Member for Governance, there would be **£14,302** available for Community Grants for the remainder of the 2025-2026 financial year.

**Laura Hyde** presented the **Resolve** application for £1,500.

Members enquired and received satisfactory answers about:

- Referral process and signposting
- Key Workers – the funding would go towards existing Key Workers. Resolve don't receive money from anywhere, they have to raise all their money and every little bit makes a difference. If they can get over their overall target, they would look to develop and expand.
- How they work with outreach officers and looking to improve relationship with PCSOs.

SP and TB both declared an interest as they have each awarded funding through their Locality Budget, therefore abstained from voting.

**MD Proposed**  
**IM Seconded**

*8 Councillors voted in favour of recommending Resolve £1,500 towards cost of a Key Worker.*

#### **4. PRESENTATION – LETCHWORTH DESIGN PRINCIPLES**

**Claire Pudney, Head of Heritage and Stewardship at Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation (LGCHF) gave a presentation on the LGCHF's Design Principles**

*The full PowerPoint presentation has been published alongside these notes*

Before the presentation started, SP and IM highlighted they are both Trustees at LGCHF.

Presentation Covered:

- History of LGCHF – how the design code was set up by Barry Parker.
- Explained purpose of the Scheme of Management.
- Showed how cumulative changes on a house can affect how it looks.
- Talked through areas covered by LGCHF in Letchworth.
- Design principles – they are currently developing additional guidance.
- Highlighted they have guidance on Energy Efficiency, Air Source Heat Pumps, Electric Charging Points and PV Panels.
- Talked about potential issues of wall insulation.
- Explained how they used funding from the Community Energy Fund to run workshops on home energy saving and used a house on Pixmore Way as a case study to explore how it could be done and costs. It totalled £15,500 without VAT.
- They now have an interactive about retrofitting a house - [Interactive Energy Efficiency guide - Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation](#)

CP provided responses to the 5 key issues that have been raised by Decarbonise Letchworth at the Letchworth Community Forum in March – details of their presentation can be found through this link under item 8 [Notes from the Meeting.pdf](#)

1. NHC Conservation Areas should replace the 'Heritage Area'
  - Explained that when combined the differences are minimal, but a review of the Character Area is being undertaken.
2. Heritage assets are Listed Buildings, or Locally Listed Buildings – drop 'Homes of special interest'
  - Heritage assets are established under Planning legislation. LGCHF have their own list as part of their estate management role.
3. Return to one Design Principle document, which can include extra requirements for homes in Conservation Areas
  - Concluded there is no difference as a result.
4. Remove requirements discouraging external insulation (subject to good design)
  - Showed issues of external insulation in the PowerPoint presentation. Went through costs. CP believes there's lots of other things that can be done instead.
5. Ease restrictions on solar panels, encourage micro-generation
  - CP understands this is a difficult one. Explained there has been success with verandas on the back of properties. Gazebos can put PV on. Know it's a work in process. The Design Principles are currently under review.

Topics covered in the Q&A:

- Solar Panels – there are currently active discussions with the Board about potential changes.
- Timeline and process for reviewing the Design Principles – 2015 was when they were last relaunched, the Modern Areas were reviewed in 2020 and then COVID caused delay in further reviews.
- MOP asked about damp at the base of buildings – CP agreed this is a problem, which is partly caused by salt from traffic. Having good mortar will help. There are lots of lessons still to learn.
- Energy Performance Certificate – discussed how to get to at least the rating of C in the principles. Need to look after the building, get repairs and fabric right. Need to work together to find solutions.
- Housing Associations - SP highlighted that the principles need to be looked at to help Housing Associations. CP advised they are in communication with them.
- External insulation – MOP shared that they think this will save money in the long-term. Also struggling to get quotes on a heat pump as the house isn't insulated. MOP expressed that all this needs to be taken into account going forwards by the LGCHF. CP acknowledged it's a changing environment and things are still a work in progress.

- Internal insulation – CP advised this can be more disruptive for the resident and there's risk. Needs to be well specified and well thought through.

## 5. LETCHWORTH BID TOWN CENTRE UPDATE

**The Letchworth BID manager, Richard Harbon, gave a presentation about their work in Letchworth Town Centre**

- Updated on what the shared prosperity fund of £24,000 has been used for:
  - Pirate ship down the Wynd.
  - Mural on the wall – in partnership with the LGCHF.
  - Discover Letchworth booklet and improvements to website. A second revision of the booklet will be coming out. Hoping it will attract the wider community.
  - Christmas tree pit in Leys Square. It will save £2000 a year.
  - Training for businesses on first aid and social media.
- New Planters in the town – have received mixed reviews but explained the sustainability behind them.
- Have a 5 year plan to make the town centre greener for longer, cheaper and more sustainable.
- The Letchworth 5k was a successful event, highlighted how the children got really involved with the 1 mile run.
- Summer of fun, was great for families.
- Looking forward now to Halloween.
- Supporting the Royal British Legion with Remembrance Sunday.
- Put out a plea for knitted poppies and received 2,000 so far, they plan to do a sea of poppies.
- Looking into ways to encourage shopping local

## 6. PRESENTATION – LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

**Cllr Laura Williams, Executive Member for Local Government Reorganisation/Devolution presented**

*The full PowerPoint presentation has been published alongside these notes, a condensed version was used to present with.*

During the presentation it was advised that:

- Central Government will make the decision of the approach to take
- One authority would be too large.
- The document submitted to Central Government will outline the three options and indicate the preferred version for each authority. Government could pick one of these options or another.

- There will be another consultation in spring next year but date to be confirmed.

SB advised that the focus will be on questions from members of the public.

Topics covered in the Q&A:

- Size of authorities – 500,000 is a guidance, they are assessing the implications of various options and what's financially viable.
- County boundaries – have been asked to do it within existing County boundaries. If they had looked at changing these, a review would have been needed which would have delayed things.
- Will Council Tax go down – it could go down, up or stay the same. Alongside this there will be a fair funding review.
- How many Councillors will there be – could be around 100 per authority but depends on which option is chosen.
- Town Council – A recent consultation in Letchworth indicated that residents did not support the proposal for one. As a result, it cannot be legally reconsidered for a further two years.

It was highlighted during these discussions by DC, who is the Shadow Executive Member for LGR/Devolution, that it's really hard to answer questions at this stage.

- Shadow authority was explained by LW and Cllr Chris Lucas, who was in the audience – The shadow authority will be elected in 2027, and will do all of the hiring of Officers and strategy work needed to transition to the new authority in 2028. Then the new authority will need to be ready to seamlessly take over operations in mid-2028. It is this work that it is hoped the recent apprentice graduates will help with, since they will have been on rotation across teams. The existing council members will work with existing officers to keep everything running during that transition year.

TT – encouraged members of the public to engage with the survey.

- Is there any consensus amongst those compiling the options?  
LW – simplification and cost saving. There are different views as different areas of the County have different types of towns and demographics. Having different opinions in the room helps to think through it differently and look at it differently.
- Will government pay for this? LW advised we pay for it but will save money in the long term.
- How will it be decided where resources will go to - LW advised there are different ways of doing it but don't know at this stage.
- Looking for reassurance the Council is still able to do the good things it does - LW – They are fully dedicated to ensuring its successful delivery and to leave a lasting legacy.
- The Extraordinary, Council meeting will be on 13 November [Agenda for Council on Thursday, 13th November, 2025, 7.30 pm | North Herts Council](#)

## **7. COMMUNITY UPDATE**

The Community and Partnerships Officer highlighted to Councillors to encourage groups to apply for a Community Grant.

## **8. WARD MATTERS & OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS**

No updates were given.

## **9. TOPICS FOR FUTURE FORUMS**

No suggestions

**MEETING CLOSED AT 21.30**