

**North Herts Council  
SOUTHERN RURAL COMMUNITY FORUM**

**Meeting held both online and in-person at the Council Offices  
On Thursday 27 November 2025 at 7.30pm**

The recording of the Southern Rural Community Forum is available on the North Herts YouTube channel: [Southern Rural Community Forum](#)

**NOTES**

**Present:** Cllr Dominic Griffiths (DG) (Chair), Cllr Vijaiya Poopalasingham (VP) (Vice-Chair), Cllr David Barnard (DB), Cllr Joe Graziano (JG), Steven Patmore (SP), Cllr Louise Peace (LP) and Cllr Paul Ward (PW).

**In attendance:** Laura Hartley (Community Partnerships Officer) (LH) and John Marshall (Community Safety Team Leader) (JM)

**Also present:** At the commencement of the meeting there were around 1 member of the public (MOP), including registered speakers.

Meeting Started at **19:30**

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Cllr Caroline McDonnell, Cllr Ralph Muncer, Cllr Lisa Nash, Cllr Claire Strong and Cllr Laura Williams.

**2. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

DG welcomed everyone in attendance.

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

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.

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

The Community Partnerships officer informed those present that there is £10,702 available in the Southern Rural grant budget. The total amount of funding requested for the meeting was £3,750. If all grants are recommended and subsequently approved, there will be £6,952 remaining in the budget for the remainder of the financial year 25/26.

Received presentations in support of grant applications by the following:

**Anne and Neil** presented the **Kimpton Folk Festival** application.

Members enquired and received satisfactory answers about:

- Confirmation of the festival cost and whether any additional funding is needed.
- Potential funding from Kimpton Parish Council, which would support existing elements of the festival, with organisers aiming to self-fund as much as possible.
- Plans for advertising to schools and the wider community.
- Delivery of workshops in local schools to develop ideas for the festival, with productions reused in schools after the event.
- The possibility of a national tour, as The Living Theatre may take the children-designed folk tale on tour.
- Which primary schools will be involved.
- The potential to apply for Hertfordshire County Council locality budget.
- Positive impacts of the festival on the community.
- Expected reach and impact, with approximately 1,000 visitors in previous years from both local and national audiences.
- Other funding streams being explored, including applications and business sponsorships.

#### **Kimpton Folk Festival vote**

VP proposed.

SP seconded.

*7 cllrs voted in favour of recommending Kimpton Folk Festival application for £1,500 towards hiring The Living Theatre to deliver workshops to local schools and a performance at the 2026 festival.*

**Alan and Julia** presented the **Knebworth Youth Project** application.

*PW abstained due to involvement with outside organisations that are also funding the project.*

Members enquired and received satisfactory answers about:

- The fact that Knebworth does not have a secondary school and the project helps maintain friendships within the village.
- Confirmation that sessions are free to attend, with an option for donations.
- The potential to apply for Hertfordshire County Council locality budget.
- The structure of the sessions, which are informal and led by young people.
- The anticipated increase in demand due to housing developments in Knebworth and the growing population.

#### **Knebworth Youth Project vote**

DB proposed.

SP seconded.

*6 cllrs voted in favour of recommending Knebworth Youth Project application for £1,500 towards youth worker salaries for 2026.*

**Steve** presented the **Pirton Sports & Social Club (PSSC)** application.

*DB abstained due to involvement with PSSC.*

Members enquired and received satisfactory answers about:

- Confirmation of what the previous funding from the North Herts Prosperity Fund (NHPF) was spent on and whether additional funding was required.
- Events such as Brew Fest and the fireworks being profit-making events, with all proceeds directed towards the new pavilion project. Any money raised is reinvested into the building and future events.

#### **Pirton Sports & Social Club vote**

DG proposed.

LP seconded.

*6 cllrs voted in favour of recommending Pirton Sports & Social Club application for £750 towards the purchase of chairs and chair trolley.*

#### **4. PRESENTATION – CCTV & FLY-TIPPING**

*Available to view at approx. 51:20 in the meeting [Southern Rural Community Forum](#)*

##### **Verbal presentation from John Marshall, Community Safety Team Leader.**

[Community safety | North Herts Council](#)

Topics covered in the Q&A:

- Cameras on private property – discussion on responsibilities between the Police, North Herts Council (NHC), and the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).
  - When cameras are on private property, ICO guidelines apply
  - ICO previously advised that having four cameras on an external wall, or up to 16 around an average home, would not be considered excessive.
- Covert CCTV:
  - These cameras are used regularly; however, details on their locations are not disclosed as they are intended to remain confidential for operational effectiveness.
  - NHC currently has 10 covert cameras, which are limited in scope and capability.
- Acknowledged the work of NHC officers to combat fly-tipping in the Southern Rural area.
- Consideration of raising fly-tipping fines:
  - Noted that increasing fines for a fixed penalty is under consideration.
  - Concerns were raised that high fines often result in cases going to court, where penalties are significantly reduced.
  - Highlighted that if a fixed penalty notice is paid, the Council retains the funds, which can be reinvested into tackling environmental crime.
- Mobile and fixed cameras are monitored at Stevenage control room.
- Vehicle seizure for fly-tipping:
  - NHC can confiscate vehicles used in fly-tipping, but storage costs during court delays can be significant.
  - Police involvement is preferred as they have power to seize vehicles, avoiding storage issues.
  - Many fly-tipping vehicles breach insurance regulations, making police action more effective.
- Annual cost of fly-tipping to NHC:
  - NHC submits monthly figures but is using outdated cost formulas.
  - Actual costs are significantly higher, especially for hazardous waste like

- asbestos.
  - Previous estimates suggested £60,000–£70,000 annually, but true costs are likely greater.
- Knebworth trends:
  - Domestic burglaries are on the rise. Local police are addressing this through patrols and both overt and covert CCTV measures.
  - Fly-tipping incidents have increased, particularly within the village rather than in surrounding rural areas.

## 5. INFORMATION NOTE ON THE DRAFT TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY

DG shared a summary of the information note and invited comments.

- PW noted that Knebworth is a large village, almost comparable to a town, and suggested there should be some consideration within town centre strategies as it continues to expand.
- LP emphasised that villages should be included in the consultation process, as residents regularly use town centres. She highlighted the importance of ensuring Southern Rural communities remain central to the strategy.

*The information note will be uploaded along with the notes of the meeting under item 7 - [Agenda for Southern Rural Community Forum on Thursday, 27th November, 2025, 7.30 pm | North Herts Council](#)*

## 6. INFORMATION NOTE ON THE PROPOSED PARKING TARIFF INCREASES

DG shared the information note and invited comments.

- DG noted that Southern Rural residents are more likely to use car parks than those living closer to town centres.
- DB highlighted that increases in parking charges would directly affect rural communities travelling into town centres.

*The information note will be uploaded along with the notes of the meeting under item 7 - [Agenda for Southern Rural Community Forum on Thursday, 27th November, 2025, 7.30 pm | North Herts Council](#)*

## 7. COMMUNITY UPDATE

The Community and Partnerships Officer highlighted:

- North Herts Heroes awards. celebrating the people that go above and beyond.
  - Nominations are now open and will close on 4 January 2026.
  - Winners will be selected by the judging panel, with films produced to celebrate their achievements.
  - They will be celebrated at the awards event in March, where they will receive a trophy, flowers and voucher.
  - Further information and nomination details can be found at: [North Herts Heroes | North Herts Council](#)

## 8. WARD MATTERS & OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

None.

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

- Police update – March 2026 at the Council Offices (tbc)
- S106 contributions and how that process works and the money being paid out.
- Inviting the ICB along to present.

**MEETING CLOSED 21:05**