

**North Herts Council
LETCWORTH COMMUNITY FORUM**

**Meeting held at Howard Garden Social Centre
On Wednesday 4 March at 7.30pm**

Present: Cllr Sadie Billing (SB) (Chair), Cllr Daniel Allen (DA), Cllr Tina Bhartwas (TB), Cllr Mick Debenham (MD), Cllr David Chalmers (DC), Cllr Emma Fernandes (EF), Cllr Ian Mantle (IM), Cllr Sean Prendergast (SP), Cllr Sean Nolan (SN) and Cllr Claire Winchester (CW)

In attendance:

Aimee Flack (Community and Partnerships Officer) (AF)
Tracy Westgate (Community and Partnerships Officer) (TW)

Also present:

At the commencement of the meeting there were around 21 members of the public (MOP), including registered speakers

Meeting Started at **19:30**

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Received apologies from Cllr Amy Allen and Cllr Tamsin Thomas.

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. PRESENTATION – POLICE UPDATE

Verbal presentation from Police Sargeant Ryan Champion (RC) from the North Herts Safer Neighbourhood Team

Presentation covered:

- Overview of the crime data for Letchworth, with full statistics included at the end of these notes.
- Highlighted the importance of using their Herts Connected platform, which is a free interactive messaging service from Hertfordshire Constabulary [Home Page - Herts Connected](#)

- Talked about priorities, further details can be found here - [North Herts Neighbourhood Policing Team priorities set | Hertfordshire Constabulary](#)
- Highlighted a big reduction in robberies. They do a lot of plain clothed patrols.
- The North Herts Neighbourhood Team will be increasing by two members.

Topics covered in the Q&A:

- Issue of regular break-ins at the old St Michael's Church was raised – RC confirmed they are getting reports of break-ins and are encouraging the Church of England to look into making the building more secure.
- Concerns were raised about shoplifting in Letchworth and reduced police visibility – RC explained that they have plain clothed Officers.
- Issue of anti-social behaviour (ASB) around the Garden Square Shopping Centre, including theft of amazon parcels – RC advised there has been a recent increase in ASB in the town and encouraged everyone present to report it.

SB emphasised at the end to keep reporting things to the Police.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN RELATION TO GRANT APPLICATION

The Community and Partnerships Officer, updated Members of community grant budgets. The Community Grant budget available is **£12,832**. The total amount of funding requested for this meeting is **£10,328**.

If the applications outlined in Appendices 2 - 9 are recommended by the Forum and subsequently approved by the Executive Member for Governance, there would be **£2,504** available to carry forward into the 2026/27 budget, subject to approval from Cabinet.

It was noted that Cllr Daniel Allen can't vote on any of the grants as he is Executive Member for Governance and gives the final approval on the grant but can ask questions.

The first application to be considered was from the **Jackmans Community Association (JCA)**.

SB and MD declared a conflict of interest as they are both Committee Members of the JCA. Therefore, a temporary Chair was required and SN was suggested.

MD proposed and EF seconded

SN was unanimously voted in as temporary Chair whilst this application was considered.

SB and MD left the room.

A representative from **Jackmans Community Association** presented their grant application for **£990** towards activities for their community event in August.

Members enquired and received satisfactory answers about:

- Promoting the event to local families – it was explained that local schools will help advertise, also through The Comet. AF advised that the Communications Team at North Herts Council will help advertise through their newsletter. It was highlighted that the Letchworth Councillor Surgery is on that day, so can have fliers to help advertise.

SP highlighted that if further funding is needed, they might like to apply to his Hertfordshire County Council Locality Budget [Members locality budget | Hertfordshire County Council](#)

TB Proposed
IM Seconded

7 Councillors voted in favour of recommending £990 to Jackmans Community Association.

SB and MD came back into the room

Representatives from **Letchworth Arcadians Musical Society** presented their grant application for **£1,330** towards the hire of rehearsal space for young members

Members enquired and received satisfactory answers about:

- Advertising – they have approached Morrisons to sing in there, looking to get out into the town to advertise. It was suggested to get in touch with Letchworth BID.

TB Proposed
SP Seconded

9 votes in favour of recommending £1,330 to Letchworth Arcadians Musical Society.

Representatives from **Being Mortal** presented their grant application for **£1,480** towards running training sessions for dementia caregivers

Members enquired and received satisfactory answers about:

- Is there scope to expand to other conditions effecting later life – they confirmed they plan to expand to outside of people living with dementia.
- They already have people interested in attending the training.
- Explained the health professionals involved.

MOP spoke in support of this work and emphasised making sure local surgeries are aware of this training.

MOP asked what happens after the training – it was explained that they will have received practical tips, also attendees usually connect with each other and continue to keep in touch. There is also a memory café in Letchworth.

CW Proposed
SN Seconded

9 Councillors voted in favour of recommending £1,480 to Being Mortal.

A representative from **Baldock Junior Badminton Club** presented their grant application for **£730** towards delivering new weekly badminton and social sessions for older adults in Letchworth.

Members enquired and received satisfactory answers about:

- Charges – confirmed it would be free during the funded period
- Advertisement – explained how they would advertise it through local active initiatives such as Herts Sport Partnership
- How many people could it cater for – around 10-12 people

There was a discussion about venue hire, noting that a venue has not yet been confirmed because the applicant is waiting to find out whether the funding application will be successful. The Grange Community Centre was identified as the preferred option, although they are open to alternative venue suggestions.

DA suggested that the recommendation be made in principle, once a venue has been booked. Therefore Members voted on this proposal.

MD Proposed
CW Seconded

9 Councillors voted in favour of recommending Baldock Junior Badminton Club £730 in principle, subject to a venue being secured.

Representatives from **Hong Kong Connect** presented their grant application for **£1,390** towards costs of activities in the upcoming year

Members enquired and received satisfactory answers about:

- How many people they support - the Lunar New Year Market usually engages around 1,000 people, as integration of the Hong Kong Community with the local community is important to their work.

- Location of the Lunar New Year Market – this is usually at the Letchworth Garden City Church. It was mentioned that they might want to connect with Letchworth BID about an outdoor event around Leys Avenue Square.

DA strongly suggested they review who they partner with for the shoebox appeal, as there has been negative press surrounding their current chosen charity.

DC Proposed
SP Seconded

9 Councillors voted in favour of recommending £1,390 to Hong Kong Connect.

A representative from **Letchworth and Hitchin Unit 182 of the Sea Cadets Corps** presented their grant application for **£1,050** towards nature related activities for Junior Sea Cadets and **£858** towards a pilot camping trip with Junior Sea Cadets and their families

Before they presented, AF highlighted the background to why the applicants have two projects to present, as outlined in appendices 7 and 8. They will also be presenting both applications to the Hitchin Community Forum on 10 March.

There were no questions for these applications.

Appendix 7 Application
EF Proposed
IM Seconded

9 Councillors voted in favour of recommending £1,050 to Letchworth and Hitchin Unit 182 of the Sea Cadet Corps.

Appendix 8 Application
CW Proposed
SN Seconded

9 Councillors voted in favour of recommending £858 to Letchworth and Hitchin Unit 182 of the Sea Cadet Corps.

Representatives from **Create Community** presented their grant application for **£2,500** towards costs to continue to deliver their core provision.

Members enquired and received satisfactory answers about:

- Demographic age they reach – generally 44-65 but beginning to get younger people. A gaming group has started to come in.
- Working with other organisations such as Sands and Tommy's – they are open to any organisations who want to work with them but resources and time can be a challenge at the moment.

- Explained that they never want cost to be a barrier for people.
- Other funding – it was suggested approaching Letchworth Civic Trust for funding. They explained they have a plan to apply to Lottery.
- How are they looking to improve their situation going forwards – They are working to strengthen their long-term sustainability by securing funding to cover their core operating costs. With those essentials in place, they can raise the rest. They have already reduced their overheads by relocating to more affordable, centrally located premises, which also improves their visibility and access within the town.

SP Proposed
TB Seconded

9 Councillors voted in favour of recommending £2,500 to Create Community Network.

5. COMMUNITY UPDATE

AF highlighted that Hertfordshire County Council is consulting on proposed changes to Hertfordshire’s post-16 home-school and college transport policy.

The consultation will run from 18 February to 12 April 2026. Further details are available on their website, where you can also share your views by completing a short online survey. <http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/ptbconsultation>

Also highlighted current funding from Settle/Paradigm - [Settle Community Benefit Fund | Settle Connect](#)

6. WARD MATTERS & OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

MOP – Raised a county-level issue that the Stevenage Bus User Group enjoys coming to Letchworth, but despite the service being promoted as improved, they feel it hasn’t. SP advised that Herts County Council has received funding to explore franchising.

MOP – raised concerns about the A1 junction when entering Letchworth, highlighting how particularly difficult the turn is for disabled people who cannot safely turn their neck to check for traffic. SP has recently met with Officers who are very aware of the issue and is on the priority list to resolve.

County Councillor Alistair Willoughby was in the audience and quickly highlighted that a new wetland construction is being carried out in Letchworth on the Pix Brook by ResilienTogether - [Home - ResilienTogether](#)

TB – Highlighted the [Members locality budget | Hertfordshire County Council](#)

DA – food waste management and how it is processed locally is working well and reducing landfill.

7. TOPICS FOR FUTURE FORUMS

SB – Would like to invite Impactful Lives. As part of this, DA would like it to also cover the negativity and abuse occurring on social media.

SB – Would like to invite local school governors to talk about how they can get involved in the community

Meeting closed at 9pm.

Letchworth Area Committee Meeting 04/03/26 Crime Data

Compares 01/04/25 – 09/02/26 with 01/04/24 – 09/02/25

All Crime

Year	This Year	Last Year	% Change
Letchworth	1817	2133	-14.8%
North Herts	5875	6387	-8%
County	73008	70599	+3.4%

North Herts

Crimes per 1000 of Population – 42.97

Ave Daily Crimes – 19

Burglary Residential - Home

Year	This Year	Last Year	% Change
Letchworth	30	59	-49%
North Herts	148	149	-0.7%
County	1631	1603	+1.7%

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
Letchworth	13	18	-27.8%
North Herts	61	50	+22%
County	825	861	-4.2%

No crimes per 1000 of population data available currently

Burglary Business & Community

Year	This Year	Last Year	% Change
Letchworth	20	25	-20%
North Herts	91	96	-5.2%

County	762	902	-15.5%
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North Herts

Crimes per 1000 of Population – 0.66

Ave Daily Crimes – 0

Theft From Motor Vehicle

Year	This Year	Last Year	% Change
Letchworth	17	38	-55.2%
North Herts	164	153	+7.2%
County	2303	2372	-2.9%

North Herts

Crimes per 1000 of Population – 1.18

Ave Daily Crimes – 1

Robbery Personal

Year	This Year	Last Year	% Change
Letchworth	7	16	-56.2%
North Herts	25	42	-40.5%
County	498	640	-22.2%

North Herts

Crimes per 1000 of Population – 0.18

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
Letchworth	789	921	-14.3%
North Herts	2466	2666	-7.5%
County	28507	26422	+7.9%

Assaults without Injury = 309 this year. 379 last year

Assaults with Injury = 213 this year. 237 last year.

North Herts

Crimes per 1000 of Population – 18.09

Ave Daily Crimes - 8

Stalking & Harassment

Year	This Year	Last Year	% Change
Letchworth	267	305	-12.4%
North Herts	829	875	-5.3%
County	9653	8335	+15.8%

North Herts

Crimes per 1000 of Population – 6.16

Ave Daily Crimes – 3

Criminal Damage/Arson

Year	This Year	Last Year	% Change
Letchworth	168	168	0%
North Herts	560	582	-3.8%
County	6000	5953	+0.8%

North Herts

Crimes per 1000 of Population – 4.07

Ave Daily Crimes – 2

Shoplifting

Year	This Year	Last Year	% Change
Letchworth	207	281	-26.3%
North Herts	462	683	-32.4%
County	7432	8496	-12.5%

North Herts

Crimes per 1000 of Population – 3.39

Ave Daily Crimes – 1

Drugs Possession

Year	This Year	Last Year	% Change
Letchworth	44	35	+25.7
North Herts	135	121	+11.6%
County	1927	1628	+18.4%

North Herts

Crimes per 1000 of Population – 0.98

Ave Daily Crimes – 0

Public Order

Year	This Year	Last Year	% Change
Letchworth	132	140	-5.7%
North Herts	381	412	-7.5%
County	4823	4555	+5.9%

North Herts

Crimes per 1000 of Population – 2.8

Ave Daily Crimes – 1

Possession of Offensive Weapons

Year	This Year	Last Year	% Change
Letchworth	21	15	+40%
North Herts	61	45	+35.6%
County	732	623	+17.5%

North Herts

Crimes per 1000 of Population – 0.46

Ave Daily Crimes – 0