

North Herts Council
SOUTHERN RURAL COMMUNITY FORUM

Meeting held both online and in-person at the Council Offices
On Thursday 5 March 2026 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 Joe Graziano (JG), Cllr Steven Patmore (SP), Cllr Louise Peace (LP) and Cllr Paul Ward (PW), Cllr Caroline McDonnell (CMcD), Cllr Lisa Nash (LN), Cllr Claire Strong (CS)

In attendance: Becca Edwards (Community Partnerships Officer) (BE) and Claire Morgan (Community Partnerships Team Leader) (CM)

Also present: At the commencement of the meeting there were 4 members of the public (MOP) and 3 registered speakers.

Meeting Started at **19:30**

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr David Barnard, Cllr Ralph Muncer, and Cllr Laura Williams.

2. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Cllr 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. PRESENTATION – NORTH HERTS SAFER NEIGHBOURHOOD TEAM

PS Taz Gill presented the North Herts Safer Neighbourhood Team's annual update Statistics outlined in the [meeting report pack](#) (page 3)

Q1 - Question from Cllr Paul Ward around Rural Coverage and PC Coverage with update on PCSO recruitment etc.

Q2 x2 - Question from Cllr Louise Pearce around speeding Bedford Road and Arlesey

Road for Cadwell ward (Ickleford and Holwell) & HGV weight limit through the village being enforced.

Q3 - Cllr Paul Ward - Referring to recent publicised Herts Connected messages referring to the proactive targeting of series for burglary offences.

PS Taz Gill promoted the Barn Meeting taking place at **Ballslough Farm, Kimpton SG4 8RG from 10am to 13:00 on Wednesday 25th March**. The meeting aims to provide the rural communities of North Hertfordshire meeting with police and partner agencies to discuss issues that affect them daily such as: Fly tipping, wildlife, hunting, the local environment, equine issues and rural affairs. For further information email: Hitchin@herts.police.uk

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN RELATION TO GRANT APPLICATIONS

The Community Partnerships officer informed those present that there is **£6,952** available in the Southern Rural grant budget. The total amount of funding requested for the meeting was **££4,642**. If all grants are recommended and subsequently approved, there will be **£2,310** available to carry forward into the 2026/27 budget, subject to approval from Cabinet.

Received presentations in support of grant applications by the following:

1st Ickleford 9th Hitchin Scout Group -

Neil Broughton presented the application requesting **£1,500** towards hall hire for their weekly Tuesday evening sessions held at Ickleford Village Hall.

Cllr Strong declared an interest as the group had received funding from the Rands Foundation of which she sits as a trustee.

Members enquired and received satisfactory answers about:

- The ownership of the village hall and how the group would fund hall hire going forward.

Vote:

*The remaining 8 Cllrs voted in favour of recommending 1st Ickleford 9th Hitchin Scout Group application for **£1,500** towards hiring Ickleford Village Hall.*

15th Hitchin Scouting -

Andrew Pryn presented the application requesting £500 for venue hire at Pirton Recreation ground.

Cllr Strong declared an interest as the group had received funding from the Rands Foundation of which she sits as a trustee.

Vote:

*The remaining 8 Cllrs voted in favour of recommending **£500** to 15th Hitchin Scouting.*

Pirton Tennis Club -

Julie Lister presented the application requesting £600 to paint permanent Pickleball lines onto the existing MUGA surface

Vote:

9 councillors unanimously voted in favour of recommending **£600** to Pirton Tennis Club.

Baldock Junior Badminton Club

Bob Green presented the application for **£730** to deliver new weekly badminton and social sessions for older adults in Whitwell.

Vote:

9 Councillors unanimously voted in favour of recommending £730 to Baldock Junior Badminton Club.

St Ippolyts Bowls Club

Celia Farley presented the application for £1,312 towards the purchase of an Allet Verticutter cassette, designed specifically to fit the Allet mower they already use.

Vote:

9 Councillors unanimously voted in favour of recommending **£1312** to St Ippolyts Bowls Club

7. COMMUNITY UPDATE

The Community and Partnerships Officer highlighted:

- North Herts Heroes awards - celebrating the people that go above and beyond.
 - Winners have been selected by the judging panel made up of the sponsors and the Chair of the Council.
 - Short films are currently being produced about each winner.
 - The films will be premiered at the awards event on 19th March,
 - There are a few tickets left for this event.
 - Further information and nomination details can be found at: [North Herts Heroes | North Herts Council](#)

- 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. <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/about-the-council/consultations/schools/personal-travel-budgets-consultation.aspx>

- Settle Community Benefit Fund:
 - [Community Benefit Fund | Settle Connect](#)
 - Their second round of funding for their Community Benefit Fund is now open until 15 March.
 - Funding of up to £3,000 per project is available.
 - Some of the key criteria to be aware of:
 - It will need to benefit the local community and residents
 - At least 50% of the beneficiaries must be Settle residents
 - It is a community-led initiative, where residents have a key role in shaping and delivering the project
 - The project must be new

8. WARD MATTERS & OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

Cllr CS – Gave a shout out to the brand new Pirton Pavillion which has now been handed over by the builders and are taking bookings. This project was in part made possible due to a £50,000 grant from North Herts Council which assisted in brokering larger funding pots.

Cllr LP – Mentioned the successful Digital Inclusion project run by the CDA in Ickleford each week. The project is open to anyone living in a rural area. It takes place at Ickleford Village Hall on Monday's 12:00 to 13:30

[Rural Digital Learners - CDA Herts](#)

Cllr CMcD – mentioned that the newly cast bells at St Mary's in Great Wymondley are now installed and a number of local residents have taken up bell ringing in the last 18 months. They are becoming more accomplished at the skill and it's worth a visit to the village on Monday evenings to hear them rehearsing.

9. TOPICS FOR FUTURE FORUMS

- HCC Highways to provide advice on maintaining villages / hedgerows to prevent speeding. Is there a way that the community can help with this?
- S106 contributions and how that process works and the money being paid out.
- Inviting the ICB along to present.
- Luton Airport Expansion was mentioned – members would like information on whether there is a mitigation strategy. Cllr Gaziano responded that the matter is currently under Judicial Review.

MEETING CLOSED 21:05



**HERTFORDSHIRE
CONSTABULARY**

Barn Meeting

The Hitchin Rural Neighbourhood Policing Team
are holding a barn meeting on:

**Wednesday 25th March
10am - 1pm**

Refreshments served from 10am

**Ballslough Farm, Kimpton,
Hitchin, SG4 8RG**

W3W - evenly.famous.priced

Barn meetings are held to enable the rural communities
of North Hertfordshire meet with police and partner
agencies to discuss issues which affect them on a daily
basis such as: fly tipping, wildlife, hunting,
the local environment, equine issue and rural affairs.

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