

**North Herts Council**  
**ROYSTON & VILLAGES COMMUNITY FORUM**

**Meeting held at Royston Town Hall, Melbourn Street, Royston, SG8 7DA**  
**On Wednesday, 18 March 2026 at 7.30pm**

**Actions from this meeting:**

XX

**NOTES**

**Present:** Councillor Tim Johnson (TJ) (Chair), Councillor Bryony May (BM) (Vice-Chair), Councillor Matt Barnes (MB), Councillor Ruth Brown (RB), Councillor Ruth Clifton (RC), Councillor Martin Prescott (MP)

**In Attendance:** Becca Edwards (BE) (Community Partnerships Officer)

**Also present:** At the commencement of the meeting there were eight members of the public present.

Meeting started at **7.32pm**

**1. Apologies for absence**

None

**2. Chair's Announcements**

Cllr Johnson welcomed everyone in attendance and Members introduced themselves.

**3. Public Participation – Grant Applications**

**BE** shared details of the remaining grant fund for this financial year.

**TJ** explained that the Royston & Villages grant pot for the 25/26 financial year could leave a carry forward amount, and Members, should they choose to do so, could recommend that applicants at this meeting receive a higher amount than they have applied for should this fit with the criteria of the grant stream.

Received presentations in support of grant applications by the following:

**Katie Linnard (KL) on behalf of Friends of Reed School.**

Members and members of the public enquired and received satisfactory answers about:

- What a trim trail is
- How the equipment is maintained
- The life of the piece of equipment

**MP** suggested enhancing the grant.

**RB** spoke in favour of the applicant.

**TJ** decided that both grant applications should be heard before any recommendations be made.

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**TJ** explained background to the amount that North Herts Centre for Voluntary Service are applying for and confirmed that they are applying for £1,000.

**Andy Nazer (AN) presented on behalf of North Herts Centre for Voluntary Service (NHCVS).**

Members and members of the public enquired and received satisfactory answers about:

- How working with local community groups will work
  - How NHCVS are going to engage the 20-30 age range
  - What the large funding agreement means
  - If the summit would differ from the volunteer conference
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**Vote to recommend that North Herts Centre for Voluntary Service receive £1,000 towards a volunteer fair and summit, as well as promotional materials.**

Proposer **MP**

Secunder **MB**

***Unanimous vote in favour of recommending NHCVS receive £1,000 towards a volunteer fair and summit, as well as promotional materials, on condition that the Community Partnerships Officer (BE) make further checks to confirm the volunteer fair would not be duplicating the work of other organisations.***

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**TJ** noted that should the Friends of Reed School application of £1,500 be recommended and approved, there would be £429 remaining in the Community Grant budget to carry forward.

**TJ** asked **KL** if additional money were granted would this support the applicant's efforts.

**KL** advised that it would.

**Vote to recommend that Friends of Reed School receive £1,929 towards a piece of trim trail equipment.**

Proposer **MB**

Secunder **RB**

***Unanimous vote in favour of recommending Friends of Reed School receive £1,929 towards a piece of trim trail equipment.***

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#### **4. Presentation – Citizens Advice North Herts (CANH)**

**Rosie Lane and Tom Hogan** presented.

- Citizens Advice is a national service that provides training and other support, but the North Herts branch operates as its own independent charity.
- CANH has an office in Royston, based at the Town Hall. They provide an initial response to all queries, including signposting where appropriate.
- The main CANH office is in Letchworth, with outreach work delivered to other areas. Reaching all villages can be challenging.
- There are multiple ways for residents to get in touch with CANH.
- CANH currently has a small grant to deliver outreach work in Royston and surrounding villages. Some of this focuses on cost-of-living issues, while other enquiries relate to door-to-door selling. They are actively promoting their ability to visit and speak to community groups.
- Rosie is keen to get out and meet local groups, including the PCSO's group, the foodbank, the library, and others. They would like help spreading the word that they can visit groups across the area.
- The North Herts website has recently been refreshed.
- CANH has many volunteers; most paid staff work part-time.
- Referrals can be made by individuals or by agencies on someone's behalf.
- CANH has a Help Guide which outlines what they can and cannot provide.
- They welcome invitations to give presentations and encourage people to get in touch with ideas.

**BM** thanked the team for their work.

#### **5. Presentation – Hitchin Town Football Club**

**Steve Jackson** presented.

Steve gave an overview of Hitchin Town Football Club, highlighting its history, structure and growing community role.

##### **Club Overview**

- The club is **not-profit** and **owned by its supporters**.
- All members volunteer their time, apart from paid managers and coaches of adult teams. Youth team coaches are volunteers, and **more volunteers are needed**.
- The club holds **FA three-star accreditation**, the highest level for a grassroots club.
- They operate:
  - **5 senior teams**
  - **Women's First Team** and a **Women's Development Side**
  - **47 youth teams** (9 girls', a few mixed, and the rest boys' teams)
- Several hundred young people play every weekend. Around **10% of Royston's population** is involved with the club in some form.

## History

- Founded in **1875**, the club is celebrating **150 years** of continuous operation.
- Only WWI, WWII, and COVID interrupted activity.
- A book has been written about the club.
- Steve thanked the Town Council for supporting the 150-year celebrations.
- A special anniversary event is planned for **8 May**, with 200 players past and present invited and a presentation evening to follow.

## Community Programme

Part of the club's future vision is to be **more than football**, using sport as a tool to support children and young people.

- Funds from a player sale allowed RTFC to launch a **Community Programme**, now staffed by **five full-time, DBS-checked employees**.
- Activities include:
  - Delivering **PE lessons, lunchtime clubs, and after-school clubs** (football, gymnastics and more).
  - Running **92 sessions per week** across Hertfordshire schools.
  - Leading **assemblies on healthy lifestyles and healthy minds**.
  - Managing the **North East Herts Schools Partnership** since 2022, including inter-school competitions.
  - Providing **free PE lessons** funded by Sport England, with schools able to opt into additional services.
  - Offering early-years sport through **Little Kickers** and **tots sessions (18 months–3 years)**.

## Challenges and Future Aspirations

- The biggest obstacle is a **lack of facilities**.
- There are **250 children on the waiting list** for youth teams due to limited capacity.
- They often have to send children to nearby villages because Royston lacks pitches.
- A long-term aspiration ("utopia") would be a **multi-pitch site within walking distance of the town**.
- Previous discussions with landowners haven't progressed.
- The club aims to become the **heartbeat of the town** and something Royston can be proud of.

**MoP** Noted that Barkway appears to have available pitches and mentioned earlier ideas for facilities near the school by McDonald's.

**RB** County must retain that land for education, but discussions are ongoing.

**MoP2** Expressed a desire for a **greater diversity of sport**, including cricket, and suggested exploring using village pitches differently. Encouraged a **coordinated approach** with different clubs.

**TJ** thanked the club for all that they do for town.

## 6. Community Update

**BE** presented.

## 7. Royston Town Council

Deputy Mayor Elizabeth Freeman presented.

- **Free After 3**  
The *Free After 3* parking initiative is coming to an end. From **1 April**, parking fees will change. After 3pm, parking in all Royston car parks will cost **£1**. We hope this will still offer some benefit to visitors, especially following the busy December period.
- **Welcome to Royston Event**  
The recent *Welcome to Royston* gathering was very well attended and received lots of positive feedback.
- **Royston Venue Proposal**  
Councillors are continuing work on the proposal for the **Royston Venue**, which aims to offer theatre performances, films, and other cultural events. Updates will be announced on the **Royston Town Council website** in due course.
- **Royston Town Elections**  
Royston Town Council elections will take place in **May**, and there will be **flexible voting options** available.
- **Mayor's Quiz**  
The Mayor's Quiz will be held on **20 March**.

## 8. Hertfordshire County Council

- **County Council Leadership & Finances**  
The Liberal Democrats have taken over Hertfordshire County Council as a minority administration.  
Herts CC has been hit harder than expected by the Fairer Charging review, losing over £40 million in the coming years.  
The Council will implement the maximum Council Tax increase permitted without requiring a referendum.
- **Budget Overview**
  - The Council's total budget is £1.2 billion, with around 50% allocated to Adult Social Care.
  - £77 million is being invested in highways, allowing for *twice as many potholes* to be repaired.
    - A 43% increase in fixes has been achieved, but potholes have risen by 25% due to several factors.
    - New methods are being trialled to speed up repair times.
- **SEND services**
  - Services are improving and are expected to retain the Requires Improvement rating.
  - Demand continues to rise, with the number of children with special needs approaching 50%.

- **Speed Management Strategy**  
A revised speed management strategy now allows town- and village-wide limits to be introduced using signs alone, without additional traffic-calming measures. Barley, Barkway and Reed have all expressed interest. Proposals for 20mph residential areas will go out to consultation.
- **Transport Developments**
  - HertsLynx is expanding, with two additional buses expected to be in service by June.
  - Government funding has been secured to conduct feasibility studies on bus franchising.
  - A505 safety work continues, including examining options for lowering speed limits in specific sections.
- **New Corporate Plan**  
A new corporate plan titled “On Your Side” has been launched, built around five core aims (details to follow).

**MB** raised concerns that previously allocated funding for verge erosion appears to have disappeared from the budget.

**RB** will investigate this and attempt to find out what has happened to the allocation.

## 9. Ward Matters & Outside Organisations

**MP** discussed planning

There are a couple of significant planning applications affecting Royston:

- **Barkway Road**  
The application was refused and is now going to appeal on 12 April. Members of the public can submit comments via the planning portal.  
**MB** noted that the Statement of Case for the appeal has now been published.
- **Burloes Development**  
This application is going to Planning Committee tomorrow (19 March).  
**TJ** confirmed that the Burloes site is identified in the Local Plan for 325 homes.
- **Sports Provision**  
**RB** reported that one development has land allocated for sports facilities, while another has funding, but there is currently no combined solution that delivers both.  
**MB** added that a nearby plot of land is listed for sale for development, but it has a Tree Preservation Order, which may restrict use.
- **Learner Pool Funding**  
Funding for a learner swimming pool has been included in the budget.  
**TJ** highlighted that there has been strong cross-party support for getting the learner pool progressed.
- **Local Concerns – Sports Facilities**  
A member of the public noted that 10 years ago, when Burloes was first raised, the community asked for football pitches. They were told at the time that football wasn’t desirable close to a wedding venue.

## 10. Open Discussion

A member of the public reported ongoing vandalism and concerns about people cycling on footpaths that are not designated for cycling. Some individuals have been belligerent when asked to move. This issue is particularly noticeable along North Road towards Tesco.

**TJ** asked whether the incidents had been reported to the police.  
The member of the public felt it was unlikely to be a high priority for them.  
**TJ** confirmed that he will inform the police about the issue.

**RB** reminded everyone that if signs are damaged or missing, they should be reported via the Hertfordshire County Council website so they can be logged and repaired.

**TJ** encouraged residents to share information and continue reporting concerns so that issues can be monitored.

Closed 21:13