

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

**Meeting held at Baldock Library, Simson Drive, Baldock, SG7 6DH
On Monday 23 March 2025 at 7.30pm**

NOTES

Present: Cllr A Willoughby (Chair) (AW), Cllr Rowe (Vice Chair) (ER), Cllr Jarvis (SJ), Cllr S Willoughby (SW), Cllr Tyson (TT), Cllr Cameron (RC)

In attendance:

Officer Frank Harrison (FH) – Environmental Health Manager
Officer Tracy Westgate (TW) – Community & Partnerships Officer

Also present:

At the commencement of the meeting there were 13 members of the public (MoP), including 5 registered speakers.

Meeting Started at 19:30

1. OPENING REMARKS

Cllr A Willoughby welcomed everyone in attendance.
H&S announcement

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None

3. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

AW 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.

4. PRESENTATION – CRIME STATISTICS DATA

PS Ryan Champion & Insp. James Lant

- NH has had an uplift of 1 officer from last year
- A house has been closed in London Road – this was made possible by the overwhelming evidence given by the public
- There is a huge focus on motorized scooters, bikes and pedal cycles which can reach very high speeds and are extremely dangerous. 30 such vehicles have been taken off the road since September last year.
- The overall crime statistics are as attached to the agenda for this meeting
- The figure for drugs offences appear higher, but this is because of more stop/search operations

Q&A

- Andy M (MoP) Are the 20mph speed limits actively going to be enforced?
- Police confirmed it is problematic to enforce them because of the limitations of the equipment they use. If people are speeding, they will be stopped and given words of advice.
- **TT** thanked **Sgt RC** for the inclusion of the Arbury figures and noted the general downwards trend over time.
- **PM** noted the response to the planning application stated what additional resources would be needed. Will this be discussed further regarding what is needed from which stages of development? **Insp JL** confirmed the force are expecting an uplift of 27 neighborhood PCs, 2 of which he is hoping will be allocated to North Herts. They are also recruiting an additional 20 PCSO, 4 of those vacancies are in North Herts.

Sgt RC & Insp JL's supporting documentation is included under item 4 of the agenda.

5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – GRANT APPLICATIONS

The Community Partnerships Officer informed those present that there is £3,467 available in the Baldock & Villages grant fund. If all grants presented at this meeting are recommended and subsequently approved, there would be £987 available to carry forward to the 2026/27 budget, subject to approval from Cabinet.

Presentations received in support of grant applications by the following:

Ruth ten Hove (RtH) presented the **St. Mary's Church, Ashwell** application.

No questions were raised.

St. Mary's Church, Ashwell vote

TT proposed.

ER seconded.

Unanimous vote in favour of recommending the St Mary's Church Ashwell application for £1,480 to provide a trained exercise professional to run a weekly hour-long exercise class at the Ashwell HUB.

Hannah Morgan-Gray (HM-G) presented the **North Hertfordshire Centre for Voluntary Services** application.

AW asked if the roll banners were single use for the event. **HM-G** confirmed they would be Baldock specific, but undated, so they could be used multiple times.

RtH asked the purpose of the event, is it to attract volunteers or to connect as they had run a similar event in Ashwell very successfully, bringing together over 30 groups.

RM-H asked when the fair will take place. **HM-G** confirmed it is likely to be in

September as they are running one in Letchworth in May and one in Hitchin in June.

North Hertfordshire Centre for Voluntary Services vote

AW proposed.

ER seconded

Unanimous vote in favour of recommending the North Hertfordshire Centre for Voluntary Services application for £1,000 towards the costs of advertising and running a Volunteer Fair in Baldock town centre.

6. PRESENTATION – OSBOURNE COURT CARE HOME Esher Williams (EW)

Osbourne Court Care Home in Baldock has recently completed a multimillion-pound refurbishment. The care home is one of 28 run by Mr. Hughes under the name B&M Care Homes. It is a very family orientated business with his daughter and her husband on the board of directors.

Osbourne Court are very keen to become an active part of the Baldock community and are offering many free events to encourage partnership. One example is they will be hosting a 4-hour dementia training session for Police Officers in Letchworth and Baldock at no cost to the Police. They are also being included in the Baldock Open Gardens this year, so hopefully this will encourage many people to visit them who have not been there before.

They place a great deal of importance on independence, dignity, living well and community for their residents and arrange for meaningful experiences to support their residents. The home is a specialist in dementia care but can cater to all types of needs. **EW** noted they are looking for a gym that they could take some of their more active residents to. **AW** suggested talking to Everyone Active about the gym at Knights Templar School.

Q&A

- **RtH** asked if Osbourne Court can provide respite care. **EW** confirmed they can.
- **ER** enquired about marketing and offered to place leaflets in the Baldock HUB.
- **Jackie (MoP)** said her mother is there and is doing very well.
- **TT** confirmed he knows a musician who might be able to attend their next open music session.
- **AW** mentioned Magenta Slipperz – **EW** is already in contact with Magenta Slipperz.

EW's presentation will be attached.

7. PRESENTATION – REVIVEL Richard Meredith-Hardy (RM-H)

RM-H made a very comprehensive and detailed presentation about the issues surrounding the water in the River Ivel, how the Ivel had looked historically and what has caused the downward trend in water flow. The Revivel Association have employed an expert, John Lawson, to help them present their case clearly

and accurately, including showing that the data the water companies had been working from was inaccurate. **RM-H** provided an excellent understanding to those present about the impacts of the water companies' actions and some insight as to why the water companies act in this way. Please see the attached comprehensive slide presentation. There was also discussion about the erasure of the invasive American minks that have no natural predator here, and how these need to be removed in order that the voles can return to the chalk streams.

RM-H's presentation will be attached.

Information about Revlvel and their work can be found here:

- [The Revlvel Association – Working together to save the upper River Ivel](#)

8. **PRESENTATION – RENTERS' RIGHTS ACT** **Frank Harrison, North Herts Council Officer (FH)**

FH explained about the new Renters' Rights Act and how it will support the tenants more, where historically things were in the landlords' favour. There will be new rules regarding no fault eviction and the timeframes surrounding how quickly issues with a rented property need to be resolved and what needs to be done if they cannot be resolved in that timescale.

Q&A

- **RM-H** noted that there is a notice that needs to be sent to all existing tenants. **FH** confirmed this had been released on Friday.
- **RM-H** noted the requirement to register as a landlord into a new National Database. **FH** confirmed this is to enable tracking of landlords who persistently provide inadequate accommodation, not allowing them to move area and disappear, and for fines to be enforced.

FH's presentation will be attached.

9. **BLADOCK TOWN CENTRE DESIGN CODE** **Cllr A Willoughby**

AW provided background detail regarding the historical Town Centre Design Code. **AW** would like to propose a change to the existing Town Centre Design Code regarding bollards and their appearance and the materials they are made from. **AW** presented a picture of the proposed new bollards and gave a comprehensive explanation of why they would be an improvement over the existing ones and how they fit with other design changes that have taken place with Baldock, specifically referring to the new benches and the bins. There was discussion regarding other aspects of the bollards, weight, how attractive they would be to scrap metal merchants, reflective surfaces being added, and what proportion of the budget might be spent on them.

An IN PRINCIPLE vote was requested from the Cllrs present.

Vote: To allow metal bollards instead of wooden ones in Baldock Town Centre.

Proposed **AW**
Seconded **ER**

It was unanimously voted in favour of amending the design code regarding the types of Bollards to be installed in Baldock Town Centre.

10. GROWING BALDOCK – URBAN & CIVIC

Paul Mumford (PM)

Q&A

- **SW** asked for the timescale for the 1st development. **PM** confirmed this is expected to be in 2028.
- **TT** noted there is current consultation open specifically regarding the environmental impact of the development. He asked if it was anticipated there would be any additional re-consultations. **PM** noted the only other one they believe will be required will be in relation to transport.
- **FH** asked about the source of water for the new development. **PM** confirmed they have been dealing directly with Affinity water as the main supplier.

11. PERSONAL TRAVEL BUDGETS CONSULTATION

Read by **AW**:

Hertfordshire County Council are consulting on proposed changes to Hertfordshire's post-16 home-school/college transport policy. From September 2026, they are proposing that Personal Travel Budgets become the standard support offer for eligible 16- to 18-year-olds. These changes aim to increase independence for young people with SEND, with any savings reinvested into improving SEND services in Hertfordshire. A simplified appeals process will remain available for families who feel supported travel is essential.

The consultation runs 18 February to 12 April 2026. It would be helpful if you could complete the short survey on the County Council Website named PTBConsultation.

<http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/ptbconsultation>

The findings will be discussed at the Education, SEND and Inclusion Panel on 6 May, before a recommendation is then made to Cabinet. If approved, changes would be introduced gradually and would not affect current 16 to 18-year-olds.

12. WARD MATTERS & OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

- **SW** raised the extreme amount of work that has been undertaken regarding making the new Baldock HUB a success from 1st April 2026.
- **ER** confirmed it had been a long and ongoing piece of work that is finally coming to fruition.
- **ER** confirmed the new Baldock HUB has lots of events already in place. Please look at the Baldock HUB webpage for further information. Tickets are available online or from the Community Centre.

- **TT** noted that the road sweeping truck had been to Newnham after approx. 5 years of asking. He is hoping it will also visit Radwell soon.
- **RC** noted there have been issues with the grass cutting in Baldock East, but that **SW** deals with it himself.
- **RM-H** asked about the ongoing issue with the lights opposite the end of Newnham Road on the other side of the A507. **TT** said the planning enforcement team cannot currently take any action as there has been a retrospective planning application for the lights. No action can be taken until this has been considered. **FH** asked if the problems were caused to residents, in which case the council might be able to intervene under the Statutory Nuisance section of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. **TT & FH** to discuss separately.

10. COMMUNITY UPDATE

TW, Community Partnerships Officer, read extracts from the Community update as contained in item 13 of the previously published agenda.

TT personally thanked **TW** for attending the Parish Council meetings, confirming it is not something any of her predecessors have done.

11. TOPICS FOR FUTURE FORUMS

None raised. **AW** asked for ideas to be sent to him.

AW Thanked everyone for attending.

MEETING CLOSED

21.38

