

North Herts Council
ROYSTON & VILLAGES COMMUNITY FORUM – 3 June 2026

Meeting held at Royston Town Hall, Melbourn Street, Royston, SG8 7DA
On Wednesday, 3 June 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 Martin Prescott (MP)

In Attendance: Becca Edwards (BE) (Community Partnerships Officer), Debbie Coates (DC) (Planning Policy Team Leader), Rachael Rooney (RR), Interim Strategic Planning Manager: Place

Also present: At the commencement of the meeting there were 16 members of the public present.

Meeting started at **7.32pm**

1. Apologies for absence

Cllr Ruth Clifton, Sarah Lucas and Cathy Brownjohn
TJ sent regards to Cllr Brownjohn.

2. Chair's Announcements

Cllr Johnson welcomed everyone in attendance. Members and the Community Partnerships Officer introduced themselves.

3. Annual Royston and Villages Community Forum Minutes

Cllr Johnson asked Members to approve the Minutes of the 2024, 2025 and 2026 Annual Royston Community Forums.

Vote to approve the Minutes of the 2024, 2025 and 2026 Annual Royston Community Forums.

Proposer **MP**
Seconder **RB**

Unanimous vote in favour of approving the Minutes of the 2024, 2025 and 2026 Royston Annual Forum Minutes.

4. Public Participation – Grant Applications

BE explained that the grant amount requested by Creative Chefs had been amended since the publishing of the report. The amount Creative Chefs are requesting to £1,460.

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

Received presentations in support of grant applications by the following:

Angie Marshall (AM) presented on behalf of Creative Chefs.

Lynn, a carer who attends Community Cook in Royston, spoke passionately about the sessions and what they mean to her. She also spoke about the lack of availability of groups for carers locally.

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

- Sustainability of the organisation
- Further grant funding
- If the project could be scaled up if additional funding were available

Vote to recommend that Creative Chefs receive £1,460 towards Community Cook sessions for carers.

Proposer **RB**
Seconder **MP**

Unanimous vote in favour of recommending Creative Chefs receive £1,460 towards Community Cook sessions for carers.

Graham Swann (GS) presented on behalf of Barkway Social Club.

Before the presentation, **RB** declared an interest due to being in discussions with the applicant about another grant and did not take part in discussion nor vote.

Vote to recommend that Barkway Social Club receive £1,500 towards replacing furniture.

Proposer **MP**
Seconder **RB**

Unanimous vote in favour of recommending that Barkway Social Club receive £1,500 towards replacing furniture.

Sam Winterburn (SW) and David Kaufmann (DK) presented on behalf of Flipside C2C CIC.

Before the presentation, **TJ and RB** declared an interest due to voting on a Royston Town Council grant for the same project in their roles as Royston Town Councillors. **TJ** handed Chairing duties over to the Vice-Chair, Cllr Bryony May. **TJ and RB** did not take part in discussion nor vote.

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

- Where the funding for the wider project costs is coming from
 - Sustainability of the project after the pilot 12 months
 - Eligibility criteria for participants
 - How people will find out about the service
 - Proportion of people that will come from the immediate area
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Vote to recommend that Flipside C2C CIC receive £1,500 towards venue hire for their pilot programme helping people gain skills to get into work.

Proposer **MB**

Seconder **MP**

Unanimous vote in favour of recommending that £1,500 towards venue hire for their pilot programme helping people gain skills to get into work.

BM handed Chairing duties back to **TJ**.

5. Presentation – New Local Plan Scoping Consultation

Rachael Rooney presented.

Overview

- The Council is preparing a new Local Plan, currently at the first (scoping) stage.
- The document is [available online](#) and at the end of the meeting.
- A Local Plan sets out how an area will develop and grow, balancing key priorities.
- The current Local Plan was adopted in 2022, but a review began last year due to the plan's long development period (started in 2011)
 - The Government has introduced a new plan making systems which sets out new and different requirements in how local plans are prepared.

Local Plan – scoping consultation

- Identifies key local issues and seeks public input on priorities and solutions.
- Includes explanation of how changes to national planning policy (NPPF) will influence the preparation of Local Plans.
- Aims to create a new vision for North Herts.

- Asks for views of how residents and other stakeholders want to be involved and engaged with as the Plan is prepared. These views will inform a communication and engagement strategy which will replace current Statements of Community Involvements (SCIs).

Key Policy Changes and Context

- Government now requires Local Plans to be prepared and adopted within 30 months.
- Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) is underway, but:
 - A new plan under reorganisation is unlikely before the mid-2030s.
 - Ongoing need for an up-to-date Local Plan to support planning decisions.

Consultation Process and Timeline

There will be three consultation stages:

- Scoping consultation (current stage) – once this has been completed and summarised the 30month timeframe begins.
- Content and Evidence Base consultation (options).
- Draft Local Plan consultation.

Timeline:

- Now: Scoping consultation (Gateway 1 – triggers 30-month timeline)
- Summer 2026: Site maps published
- Oct/Nov 2026: Options consultation
- Oct 27 /Jan 2028: Draft Local Plan consultation
- Summer 2028: Examination
- Jan 2029: Adoption

Engagement methods for future stages include:

- Email and post
- Press releases and social media
- Posters
- Community Forums
- In person meetings / workshops

Comments can be submitted via our online platform www.north-herts.gov.uk/scoping-stage or by email at yourlocalplan@north-herts.gov.uk

Q&A

Need for a New Plan & Cost

MP The last Local Plan was only adopted in 2022, what has changed to justify restarting the process, and what will it cost taxpayers?

RR The previous plan took over a decade to prepare (from 2011) and it was a requirement by the inspector for an early review to approve the Plan. An up-to-date plan is needed to:

- Reflect current housing needs and policies
- Provide clarity and certainty for developers and residents

- Avoid risks associated with an out-of-date plan (e.g. speculative development)

RB The previous Local Plan cost approximately £1 million to produce.

RR The requirement to update plans within shorter timescales is set by central Government, not the Council.

Cross-Boundary Working (South Cambridgeshire and Royston)

MB How often is the Council working with neighbouring authorities such as South Cambridgeshire?

RR Engagement is regular and ongoing, particularly on shared issues such as:

- Sports provision
- Housing distribution
- Infrastructure planning

South Cambridgeshire is currently working under a legacy planning system.

Government changes are encouraging more collaborative “strategic” planning across wider geographic areas, particularly across Hertfordshire.

RB Royston presents a particular challenge because:

- It sits on the border with Cambridgeshire.
- Strategic planning frameworks for Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire do not fully align.

It was noted that Greater Cambridge development plans are evolving, with some nearby proposed developments (e.g. beyond the A505) not currently included in their Local Plan.

NHDC Influence Over Neighbouring Development

TJ What influence does the Council have over developments proposed in neighbouring areas (e.g. 1,500 homes in Cambridgeshire)?

RR The Planning Inspector determines whether Local Plans can be found sound and adopted. However:

- Neighbouring authorities are formally consulted
- North Herts can submit views and highlight concerns
- The Council can request infrastructure contributions or mitigation

If there is disagreement between authorities these will be discussed as part of the examination which the Planning Inspector will decide. Engagement is influential but not determinative.

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)

MOP 1 There is uncertainty about whether Royston will remain in North Herts, making it unclear how to engage with the Local Plan at this stage.

RR The Local Plan process are mandated by Government. North Herts has received Government funding for the new system which stipulates certain milestones

Even if boundaries change, the new plan will still apply to the geographical area of current North Herts until superseded by a new Local Plan by the new authority which won't be likely till mid 2030s.

RB It is not possible to pause plan-making due to LGR. North Herts already does not have a 5 year housing land supply. Risks of delay increased North Herts exposure to speculative development. It is important to progress as much as possible before LGR takes effect.

Leader of Herts County Council Steve Jarvis (SJ) Agreed that the timelines are not well aligned. Future authorities may inherit multiple Local Plans across different areas, creating complexity.

Site Allocations and Evidence Base

Reed Parish Councillor Ken Langley (KL) When will site allocations be published, and are currently submitted sites already being assessed?

DC Submitted sites will be published in Summer 2026 as mapped as red-line boundaries. Officers are carrying out detailed site assessments, including visits and evaluation. Sites will then be filtered into a smaller number of options

RR The Options consultation (Oct 2026) will not include final site selections but the map showing all sites submitted will be published in advance of the options document to help inform consultation on a spatial strategy. The Draft Local Plan which will be consulted in 2027 will contain proposed site allocations

DC Parish councils have been contacted to provide input on services and facilities to inform the settlement hierarchy .

Monitoring and Delivery

Town Councillor Ed Nutting Once adopted, how will the Local Plan outcomes be monitored?

RR Government is introducing updated monitoring requirements for Annual Monitoring Reports. Plans must include:

- Up to 10 measurable outcomes linked to the vision
- Annual monitoring reports, which will include:
 - the outcomes linked to vision,
 - a set of national indicators
- indicators linked to the Strategic Environmental Assessment.

Neighbourhood Plans

Barkway Parish Councillor Graham Swann How will the Local Plan interact with existing Neighbourhood Plans?

RR Where there is a conflict between Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans, the most recently adopted policy will apply. NP remain valid for 5 years. Government is introducing Neighbourhood Policy Statements as a quicker, lighter-touch alternative to reviewing Neighbourhood Plans.

Infrastructure (Water, Sewage, etc.)

Barkway Parish Councillor Graham Swann How is infrastructure capacity, particularly water and sewage, taken into account in terms development?

RR Statutory responsibility lies with utility providers

DC In relation to the preparation of the new Local Plan, the Council is preparing evidence base. A water strategy is being developed which providers will feed into. Infrastructure is factored into site assessments.

National Policy Changes (NPPF)

Barkway Parish Councillor Graham Swann The NPPF changed several times during the previous Local Plan process and may do so again.

RR Acknowledged this frustration - changes to national policy are outside local control, but plans must adapt accordingly.

Housing Targets

MOP 5 What is happening to the housing target?

DC Last year's figure 1,041 homes/year. This year as of May 2026 slight decrease (1,036), Government calculation. Figures are updated twice yearly - March and May - by Government using a calculation based on housing stock and affordability.

RR The draft plan will use the most recent available figures at that time. If targets change, the Council must adjust the plan. The figure at the time of examination will be the final figure used for calculating housing requirement for the new Plan.

Environmental Protections

Town Councillor David May Are environmental protections set locally or nationally?

DC Protections such as SSSIs are set at national level and must be followed

RR Planning policy spans national, regional and local levels, each with defined responsibilities

6. Community Update

BE presented.

7. Royston Town Council

Deputy Mayor Tim Johnson presented the update.

- **Elizabeth Freeman (EF)** has been appointed as the new Mayor.
- The Mayor's chosen charity for this year is [Outside of the Box](#).
- EF is looking forward to attending and supporting a wide range of events over the coming year.
- Plans for The Venue are progressing well.
- All upcoming events are being regularly published.
- TJ expressed that he is pleased to take on the role of Deputy Mayor.
- The council has welcomed 10 new Town Councillors, bringing a wealth of new knowledge and perspectives.
- **Cllr Ed Nutting** is leading work on The Venue project.

8. Hertfordshire County Council

Leader of Herts County Council Steve Jarvis presented.

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)

- There is still no confirmed outcome, with an update expected within approximately one month.
- It is important to ensure that core responsibilities, such as Local Plan delivery and other key services, continue despite the uncertainty.
- This presents a significant challenge and is estimated to cost around £100 million across Hertfordshire.
- Emphasis was placed on the need to remain focused on delivering services for residents.

20mph Zones

A consultation is about to begin on introducing 20mph limits in:

- Royston
- Barley
- Barkway

These areas will be consulted on first (June), with additional areas to follow later.

Buses

Work is underway to review and improve the bus network. The aim is to move towards a franchised model, similar to London and Manchester, where, the Council determines routes and timetables, and operators are contracted to run services.

This would replace the current system where operators choose only the most profitable routes, leaving gaps in provision.

Property

The Council is reviewing its property and land portfolio.

Focus is on:

- Bringing empty properties back into use, or
- Selling assets that have been unused for many years

SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities)

- Assessments are generally being completed within expected timescales.
- Work is ongoing to ensure schools can meet increasing demand and needs.

A505 – Potholes and Safety

Potholes on the A505 are due to be repaired next month, using a longer-lasting approach.

A wider safety review of the A505 has been carried out, covering the stretch from the Cambridgeshire border to just before the Baldock bypass. This will lead to short-term improvement proposals for the road.

9. Ward Matters & Outside Organisations

BM attended a session held by Network Rail regarding vegetation clearance.

- Representatives from both Network Rail and their contractors were present.
- Following a number of complaints from residents, particularly around Browning Close, an amended plan has now been agreed for that section of work.

MP Nutwood Pubs hosts a business networking meeting on the first Friday of each month. A Councillor surgery is held on the first Saturday of each month, 10:00–11:00am at The Woodman.

The Barley Show will take place on 11 July.

RB advised that North Herts is hosting a screening of the film *The Power Station* on 10 June. The film will also be shown at the Parish Church in June/July.

MB The Barkway Road inquiry took place in May, with the Inspector's decision expected late June/early July.

An Open Day at Royston Leisure Centre will mark the completion of the decarbonisation scheme. The event will be attended by Gladiator Nitro.

10. Open Discussion

MOP5 raised concerns about the Hedera Garden estate, noting:

- There is a tarmacked path through the middle, but Network Rail has installed a metal fence, blocking access. Question raised as to why the developer left the route open, but Network Rail has closed it.

MOP6 responded that this is due to the presence of an underpass alternative.

SJ provided further clarification:

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The intention is to divert the path towards Ivy Lane, routing it underneath the railway via the underpass.

Network Rail has undertaken work on the underpass and regraded access, linking it to the path leading towards the bypass. However, the route currently reaches a dead end at the Cambridgeshire boundary, as further works are required. Hertfordshire is waiting for Cambridgeshire to complete their section of the route.

It is possible that Network Rail installed the fence due to delays in this cross-boundary work.

In future, pedestrians will be able to pass under the railway, but not directly across the bypass at that location.

SJ added that the existing bridge was originally constructed to maintain access to agricultural land, rather than for public use.

Closed 21:30