

**North Herts Council
LETCHWORTH COMMUNITY FORUM**

**Meeting held at Council Chamber - District Council Offices
On Wednesday 24 June at 7.30pm**

Due to extreme weather conditions, the meeting was moved from Howard
Garden Social Centre

Present: Cllr Sadie Billing (SB) (Chair), Cllr Daniel Allen (DA), Cllr Mick Debenham (MD), Cllr David Chalmers (DC), 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), Laura Hartly (Community and Partnerships Officer) (LH), Rachael Rooney (RR) (Interim Strategic Planning Manager), Debbie Coates (DC) (Strategic Planning Team Leader)

Also present:
There were around 10 members of the public (MOP), including registered speakers

Meeting started at **19:35** to allow for anyone walking from the original location.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Received apologies from Cllr Emma Fernandes, Cllr Tamsin Thomas, Cllr Amy Allen and Cllr Tina Bhartwas.

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. ANNUAL LETCHWORTH COMMUNITY FORUM MINUTES

Members voted whether they wish to approve the minutes of the 2024, 2025 and 2026 Annual Letchworth Community Forums.

**DA Proposed
IM Seconded**

Following a vote, Members unanimously voted in favour of approving the minutes of the meetings from 2024/25/26

4. NEW LOCAL PLAN SCOPING CONSULTATION

Rachael Rooney (RR) Interim Strategic Planning Manager and Debbie Coates (DC) Strategic Planning Team Leader presented.

RR gave an outline of what the scoping consultation sets out to do and background as to why it's important.

The PowerPoint presentation has been published alongside these notes. For full details please see the Scoping Document - [Community consultation strategy](#)
The scoping consultation is open until 28th June and welcome any feedback.

Topics covered in the Q&A:

- Availability of an easy read version of documents – it was advised they will look into this for the next stage of consultation in October.
- Does the scan of the QR code say at the beginning how long it will take to complete the feedback? – it was advised it doesn't and they don't know if it is possible to do this but there is flexibility in completing it in that you can save as you go.
- With Local Government Reorganisation in mind, will the new authority be voting on approving the plan – it was advised there isn't an exact answer for this. Once the new LGR arrangements are known, it is expected that the Government will release new guidance on the regulations about new plan making and LGR arrangements.
- How engagement of the consultation is going so far – it was advised there has been a reasonable amount of responses so far and anticipate more responses in the last week. Explained that officers reached out to hard to reach groups.

5. PRESENTATION - IMPACTFUL LIVES & IMPACTFUL GOVERNANCE

Andrew Waite (AW) and Naomi Reeve (NR) from Impactful Lives and Impactful Governance (a collaborative partnership) presented on what's available for LGBTQ+ people in Letchworth and Hertfordshire.

Summary of the presentation:

- Explained the background behind Impactful Governance (IG) which was set up to educate, research, Mentoring and deliver training & support in Domestic Abuse & Unpaid Carer Support. Impactful Lives (IL) is a charity which was set up by IG and works in combination, delivering events, suicide prevention, dementia support, Queers and Peers meetings and is Third Party Hate Crime Reporting Centre, working with Herts Constabulary to report LGBTQ+ Hate Crimes.
- Thanked the council for their recent motion for support for Trans Rights & all LGBTQ+ people in the District. Full details of the motion can be found [here](#) under item 12. IG will continue to push for this at other Councils.
- Will be at the North Herts Pride event on 22 August in Hitchin [North Herts Pride - Visit Hitchin](#)
- Queers and Peers Groups - there are six in the County, the nearest one to Letchworth is Hitchin where they have on average 25 attending. They have social activities such as crafting and mindfulness, creating a safe space for people to open up. IL can then signpost to IG initially for additional individual support and other organisations that can help in areas such as, housing support and money

issues.

- IG and IL receive abuse every day.
- Their research shows the biggest issue in the LGBTQ+ community is suicide & Mental Health as a result of constant abuse to some within the LGBTQ+ community.
- They are a hate crime reporting service, for those who don't feel comfortable reporting it directly to the police themselves.
- They offer 1:1 mentoring for complex emotional support and resolving issues/achieving goals which is for between 4-6 weeks.
- They have given front-line training to organisations such as Citizens Advice, Age UK Hertfordshire, HPFT (NHS) Drug Link and others
- Pride is not just a day or a month but all year round and these services also operate year-round.

Further details on what was presented have been published alongside these notes.

Topics covered in the Q&A:

- Letchworth night-time economy – it was raised by MOP that people in the LGBTQ+ community don't feel safe/comfortable at nighttime venues in Letchworth and more needs to be done to support the community. SB acknowledged and agreed with this issue and wants it to be raised by the Letchworth Community Forum to the Council.
- How to contact Impactful Lives – website has contact details - [impactful lives](https://www.impactful-lives.org.uk) Can also come along to a social event. Impactful Governance also has a website for additional LGBTQ+ services at <https://ig-cic.org.uk> and both can be contacted by phone: 01923 231660
- Capacity to do Queers and Peers group in Letchworth – Impactful Lives don't currently have an offer in Letchworth. AW advised they need support and funding. To be sustainable they need a free venue and larger pots of funding. Their Hitchin group is their most popular one across the county. DA agreed that people aren't willing to go out at night and talked about abuse online. DA knows of a local venue that might be an option.
- How to find things in common when there are many different situations and outlooks – there was a discussion around intersectionality and the many layers that overlap within the LGBTQ+ community. Everyone is an individual and there are many different perceptions. Some groups need to be exclusive so there is a safe space.
- Black and queer people need a space – MOP shared that they have to travel to London to be with other black and queer people. Need to recognise marginalised communities within the LGBTQ+ community. AW would really like to start another group and explained how broad groups can firstly build momentum. Setting something up is also dependent on funding and resources.

Both Impactful Lives (Charity No. 120336) & Impactful Governance (Community Interest Company) were commended for their work and thanked for coming.

6. PRESENTATION – LETCHWORTH BID

Letchworth BID sent their apologies.

7. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN RELATION TO GRANT APPLICATION

AF updated Members of community grant budgets.

The Community Grant budget available is **£21,404**.

It was explained that since publishing the report, the application outlined in Appendix 4 has withdrawn as they have already carried out the project due to timescales of the quote and receiving some funding from the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation. As per the grant criteria, we cannot retrospectively fund. Therefore, the total amount of funding requested for this meeting was originally going to be **£4,051** but is now **£3,051**.

If the applications outlined in Appendix 2 and 3 are recommended by the Forum and subsequently approved by the Executive Member for Governance, there would be **£18,353** available for Community Grants for the remainder of the 2026-2027 financial year.

Received presentations in support of grant applications by the following:

Representative from **Letchworth Garden Shed** presented an application for £1,551 towards the purchase of electrical appliances to expand borrowable items stock.

Members enquired and received satisfactory answers about:

- Partnerships with local housing associations – the process of meetings with them. Settle residents receive free membership.
- Extra batteries – it was confirmed they would be looking into also getting the most appropriate batteries.

Members shared general supportive comments and how useful it is to be able to borrow items.

MOP – gave their support. Aware of people who are financially struggling and need the items provided.

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.

SP Proposed
SN Seconded

7 Members voted in favour of recommending £1,551 to Letchworth Garden Shed.

Representative from **Caring Herts CIC** presented an application for £1,500 towards the running of weekly Wellbeing Hub Sessions.

Members enquired and received satisfactory answers about:

- Whether charging has affected attendance – It hasn't and they have a hardship fund for those struggling financially.
- Is there an age restriction – confirmed there isn't one

SP recommended they get in touch to apply to SP's Herts County Council Locality Budget [Members locality budget | Hertfordshire County Council](#).

DA – invited them to the Wilbury Community Café to promote the wellbeing session they run in that area.

**SP Proposed
IM Seconded**

7 Members voted in favour of recommending £1,500 to Caring Herts CIC.

5. COMMUNITY UPDATE

AF provided an update on Baldock Badminton Club. At the last meeting it was recommended that they be awarded funding once a venue is secured in Letchworth for delivering new weekly Badminton Social Sessions. AF confirmed the venue they plan to hold them in, with a view to starting in September.

Also highlighted that Jackmans Community Centre's Fun Day is on the 15th August, 12-4pm.

6. WARD MATTERS & OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

SN – highlighted that the Council will be soon launching a campaign inviting residents to celebrate the District.

DA – thanked those who came to the Powerstation showing at the Broadway Cinema.

CW – shared upcoming events in June which are part of Letchworth Festival.

SP – advised that a speed limit consultation around Broadway Gardens area is likely to go to consultation in the autumn but to be confirmed.

7. TOPICS FOR FUTURE FORUMS

SB advised of the below upcoming topics:

- Inviting Governors from local schools to share any issues.
- Green Space Consultation.
- Local Government Reorganisation likely.

MEETING CLOSED AT 21:26