

**Meeting held at Royston Town Hall, Melbourn Street, Royston, SG8 7DA  
On Wednesday, 23 September 2026 at 7.30pm**

**Actions from this meeting:**

Residents encouraged to participate in the Green Space Strategy consultation before it closes on 30 September.

[Have your say on North Herts Council's green spaces | North Herts Council](#)

Residents encouraged to respond to proposed development sites. Information and link to comment can be found [here](#).

Green Space Team to provide an update on mowing concerns raised in the Twigdens area.

**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), Alan North (AN) (Green Space Service Manager), Kieran Cockayne (KC) (Graduate Management Trainee)

**Also present:** At the commencement of the meeting there were 24 members of the public present.

Meeting started at **7.33pm**

**1. Apologies for absence**

Cllr Ruth Clifton

The Chair noted that Cllr Sarah Lucas has not attended a Forum meeting since Sept 2025 and Cllr Cathy Brownjohn since December 2024.

**2. Chair's Announcements**

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

### 3. Local Government Reorganisation Update

Councillor Johnson provided an update on Local Government Reorganisation. Please see end of document for more detail.

### 4. Public Participation – Grant Applications

BE shared details of the available grant fund.

Received presentations in support of grant applications by the following:

**Richard Julian (RJ) presented on behalf of Caring Herts CIC.**

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

- Other funding Caring Herts receives
- Organisation turnover
- How attendee figures in Royston compare against other areas in North Herts
- Locality budget amount
- Public fundraising

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**Vote to recommend that Caring Herts receive £1,485 towards venue hire for their wellbeing hub in Royston.**

Proposer **TJ**

Seconder **BM**

***Majority vote in favour of recommending Caring Herts CIC receive £1,485 towards venue hire for their wellbeing hub in Royston.***

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**Anneso Allouis (AA) presented on behalf of Herts Visual Arts.**

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

- Other sources of funding
  - Clarification of participant numbers
  - Timing of the Makers Fair
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**Vote to recommend that Herts Visual Arts receive £1,494 towards public workshops at the Big Makers Fair.**

Proposer **MP**

Seconder **RB**

***Unanimous vote in favour of recommending that Herts Visual Arts receive £1,494 towards public workshops at their Big Makers Fair.***

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**Gary Sutcliffe (GS) presented on behalf of Resolve.**

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

- Other sources of funding.
- Explained that Resolve are in discussion with North Herts Council about a funding agreement for future years.
- Referral routes into the service.

Two Members expressed that they would not support a recommendation of grant funding. The Chair suggested recommending a lower amount.

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**Vote to recommend that Resolve receive £500 towards key worker costs.**

Proposer **TJ**

Seconder **BM**

***Two Members voted in favour, two against and one abstained. The Chair used his casting vote in favour, therefore it is recommended that Resolve receive £500 towards key worker costs.***

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## **5. Green Space Team Consultation**

**Alan North and Kieran Cockayne presented.**

Key points included:

- The consultation is intended to inform the future Green Space Strategy.
- A transitional strategy may be required depending on Local Government Reorganisation outcomes.

- The consultation seeks views from residents across the district.
- An online survey is available via QR code.
- The consultation covers green spaces managed by North Herts Council.

**AN** advised that green spaces include:

- Parks.
- Playgrounds.
- Burial grounds.
- Commons.
- Roundabouts.
- Areas maintained under agreement with Hertfordshire Highways.

Members and residents raised a range of issues including:

### **Rewilding and Sustainability**

**AN** advised that biodiversity, sustainability and drought resistance are key considerations for future planting schemes. At Priory Memorial Gardens, unsustainable planting has been removed and new approaches are being trialled.

### **Priory Memorial Gardens Bandstand**

**AN** reported that the Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) is currently the priority capital project. Future improvements to the gardens, including the bandstand, will be subject to consultation due to differing views on its future use.

### **Events Infrastructure**

Residents suggested providing electrical connections within Priory Memorial Gardens to reduce the use of generators at events. **AN** advised this could be explored alongside future improvements to the bandstand area.

### **Seating Provision**

Residents requested additional shaded seating within the gardens. **AN** advised that existing bench locations could be reviewed.

### **Protected Sites**

**AN** advised that several sites managed by the Green Space team have conservation or environmental designations, including Oughtonhead and Ivel Springs.

### **Verge Management**

Concerns were raised regarding mowing around trees within the Twigdens estate.

**AN** acknowledged frustrations and advised feedback would be shared with contractors.

**TJ** requested that a further update be brought to a future meeting.

## 6. Therfield Heath Conservators

**Nick Keep** (NK), Chair of the Conservators, provided an overview of the work of the Conservators. Conservator David May (DM) joined to answer questions.

**NK** advised that there are currently vacancies for Conservators and encouraged interested residents to contact the organisation. Please see link here for more information: [Therfield Heath & Greens – The Listing Magazine](#)

Topics discussed included:

### **Fire Risk**

**NK** confirmed that open fires are not permitted on the Heath and fire risk is closely monitored.

### **Sports Provision and Use of the Heath**

Discussion took place regarding the demand placed on sports pitches.

Representatives advised:

- Sports pitches are heavily used and have limited recovery time.
- Royston has a shortage of pitch provision.
- Additional sports facilities would require land and funding.

Members discussed whether sports clubs are contributing sufficiently towards maintenance costs. **NK** advised that rental arrangements are periodically reviewed.

### **Police and Enforcement**

**NK** advised that Conservators work closely with Hertfordshire Police regarding misuse of the Heath and that communication is generally positive.

### **Ecology and Recreation**

Residents asked how the balance is managed between protecting ecology and encouraging public use.

**NK** explained that obtaining permissions from Natural England can limit what works can be undertaken, but the Conservators continue to seek an appropriate balance between conservation and recreation.

### **Volunteering**

**NK** advised that local organisations, including Johnson Matthey and Saffron Building Society, support volunteer activities on the Heath.

### **Future Sports Provision**

A wider discussion took place regarding the need for additional sports facilities to support population growth. Members noted ongoing discussions involving Royston Town Council and other stakeholders regarding future provision.

**DC** advised that recent sports facility assessments identified under-provision in Royston and opportunities are being explored through planning policy processes.

## **7. New Local Plan Scoping Consultation Update**

**Debbie Coates** presented an update on the new Local Plan process.

Key points included:

- Cabinet has approved progression of the Content and Evidence consultation.
- Consultation documents are expected to be published in early October.
- Sites submitted by landowners and developers have now been published. These sites are not allocated for development and have not yet been assessed.
- Residents are encouraged to provide comments on submitted sites.

**DC** advised that North Hertfordshire is required to plan for just over 1,000 homes per year. Existing commitments account for approximately 8,000 homes, with additional sites required to meet future housing needs.

A public consultation event is scheduled to take place at Royston Town Hall on 20 October.

Discussion covered:

- Provision of schools, healthcare, sports facilities and other infrastructure.
- Engagement with service providers.
- The importance of residents commenting at this stage of the process.

**RB** thanked officers for clearly communicating that submitted sites are developer proposals rather than allocated sites.

## **8. Community Update**

**BE** provided a community update.

Information shared included:

- [The Communitas Hub](#)
- Activities at the Old School House, run by North Herts Council's Wellbeing Team.  
[Events | Health Hub North Herts](#)

**9. Royston Town Council**

**Mayor Elizabeth Freeman** presented.

Highlights included:

- Improvements to the Council's Facebook presence.
- Musical bingo event for older residents.
- Ongoing improvements at The Royston Venue.
- Upcoming consultation activities regarding The Venue on Tuesday 6 October. More information can be found [here](#).
- Availability of grants. [Grants - Royston Town Council](#)

**TJ** advised that new branding is being installed replacing The Picture Palace signage.

**RB** noted that £84,000 of Section 106 funding has been invested in The Venue.

**10. Hertfordshire County Council**

**Leader of Herts County Council Steve Jarvis** presented.

**Flood Prevention**

Additional funding has been allocated towards drainage maintenance and flood mitigation works ahead of winter.

**Bus Services**

Work is underway to review and improve bus services, with consideration being given to a franchising model similar to those used in London and Manchester.

**A505 Safety Improvements**

Safety improvements are being considered along the A505, including the Tesco roundabout and other locations with a history of collisions.

**Highways Maintenance**

Members and residents raised concerns regarding potholes and road surface conditions, particularly between Twigdens and Melbourn Road.

**SJ** advised that:

- Highways funding has increased.
- Alternative methods of road maintenance are being explored.
- Residents should continue reporting defects through the County Council website. [Report a street light, pothole or other problem | Hertfordshire County Council](#)

### **Traffic Improvements at Flint Cross**

It was anticipated that consultation would be undertaken regarding any future proposals.

## **11. Open Discussion**

Residents raised concerns regarding the visibility of consultations and engagement opportunities.

Suggestions included:

- Improved signposting across council websites.
- Greater use of social media.
- Publishing consultations in a single, easily accessible location.
- Providing clearer information regarding the responsibilities of different councils.

Members noted ongoing work to improve communication channels and digital engagement.

## **12. Ward Members and Outside**

**MP** Nutwood Pubs hosts a business networking event on the first Friday of each month. Councillor surgeries continue on the first Saturday of each month from 10-11am at The Woodman.

The Chair thanked everyone for attending.

Meeting closed at approximately 9.40pm.

### **Local Government Reorganisation Update**

On 7 September Central Government announced that the current Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) programme is being paused whilst a review takes place. The review has been announced to ensure the process is robust and aligns with the new government's plans to shift power, funding, and accountability from Whitehall and Westminster to local elected mayors and combined authorities.

For Hertfordshire this means that the decision to create four new unitary councils for 1 April 2028 has been paused while this review is carried out. This means there will not be elections to the shadow authorities. The May 2027 local elections planned before LGR was announced will go ahead in the other nine Hertfordshire districts and boroughs. Parish Council elections will continue as planned for North Herts in May 2027 with the next North Herts District Council elections held in May 2028.

This Government states that it remains committed to devolution and remains of the view that unitary councils are a better foundation for mayors and strategic authorities. We await details on the devolution plans and how the Government plans to ensure effective and sustainable local government in the future. We also await further details on the scope and timetable for the review and will update staff, councillors, stakeholders and the public when there is further substantive news. We were to have a Q& on LGR this evening, which we did advertise prior to 7 September. Please accept our apologies if you have come this evening to specifically hear more about it.