

COMMUNITY NEWS FROM NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

OUTLOOK



ELECTIONS

CARELINE

LOCAL PLAN

WHAT'S ON



OUT & ABOUT THIS
SPRING
IN NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE



SPRING 2015

www.north-herts.gov.uk

FROM THE LEADER

“ As spring is upon us, now is the time to get out and about in our parks, nature reserves and playgrounds. Why not pop down to Purwell Meadows in Hitchin, where major improvement works have been taking place (pg 12). The popular open space celebrated its 20th anniversary of being designated a Local Nature Reserve last year. Meanwhile, new play equipment has been installed at Ransoms Recreation Ground in Hitchin, (pg 13) including lots of natural play features and we are pleased to confirm that work has resumed at the Play Area on Walsworth Common, following our application for permission to

carry out the works being approved by Government. The Council had to make an application for permission as the works are being carried out on Registered Common Land.

2015 is sure to be a busy year, with both Parliamentary and District elections taking place on 7 May. You can find the timetable for the elections, including deadlines for registering for a postal or proxy vote on page 11. Later this year we have the opening of the North Hertfordshire Museum and community facility at Hitchin Town Hall to look forward to. See page 11 for an update on progress.

Finally, two projects to enhance local facilities have been given the go-ahead. Work to create a splash park at Bancroft Recreation Ground is due to commence in the Autumn (pg 5) and a £3million project to upgrade the facilities at North Herts Leisure Centre (pg 5) is also due to kick off in the summer. We also hope to bring news of proposals for a further splash park for Royston in the next edition of Outlook ”

CLLR LYNDA NEEDHAM,
LEADER OF NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL



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CONTACTING NHDC

Most NHDC services can be accessed online. Find out the date of your next waste collection, apply for a licence, report an issue, register to vote or pay a bill all through our website: www.north-herts.gov.uk



CHECK
OUT OUR
WEBSITE

OTHER WAYS TO CONTACT US:

By email: service@north-herts.gov.uk
by Phone: 01462 474000



Like our Facebook page
www.facebook.com/northhertsDC



Follow us on twitter
[@NorthHertsDC](https://twitter.com/NorthHertsDC)

DIRECT LINES

- Benefits 01462 474597
- Careline Community Alarms 0300 999 2 999
- Housing Advice 01462 474 682
- Waste and Recycling Collection including:
 - Missed bins
 - Graffiti
 - General waste & recycling queries call: Veolia 0800 328 6023
 - Street cleaning
 - Litter

OUT OF HOURS

- Out of Hours in an Emergency: Homelessness, Environmental Health, Street Cleansing, Parks, Public Buildings and Car Parks: 01462 459368

LEISURE CENTRES

- Stevenage Leisure Limited (SLL) manages NHDC owned Leisure Centres. Email: enquiries@stevenage-leisure.co.uk
- Hitchin Swim Centre 01462 441 646
- Archers Fitness Centre, Hitchin 01462 437 111 hitchin@stevenage-leisure.co.uk

- North Herts Leisure Centre, Letchworth 01462 679 311 leitchworth@stevenage-leisure.co.uk
- Royston Leisure Centre 01763 255 190 royston@stevenage-leisure.co.uk

OTHER CONTACTS:

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

To report issues with streetlights, potholes, traffic lights and other highways issues use the Herts Highways fault reporting system <https://www.hertsdirect.org/faultreporting/>

For general enquiries contact 0300 123 4040

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE HOMES

Tel: 01462 704100
www.nhh.org.uk

HOWARD COTTAGE HOUSING ASSOCIATION

Tel: 01462 683307
www.howard-cottage.co.uk



PROPOSED JOINT WASTE & STREET CLEANSING CONTRACT



At a meeting of NHDC's Cabinet in December, Councillors agreed to a proposal to develop a business case to look at the potential for NHDC to work with East Herts District Council on a joint Waste Collection and Street Cleansing contract. These services represent a significant proportion of NHDC's expenditure and the implications of the project could mean an improvement in the cost effectiveness and resilience of these services for residents, through shared resources.

Bringing services together, though not without challenges, could improve efficiency and deliver financial savings. Such savings may include shared specialist vehicles, reduced building/depot costs and saving in contract procurement costs.

The next step will be to report back to Cabinet in June 2015 with the outline business case to decide whether to approve the joint project and how these services will be controlled and managed if the contract is awarded.

The new contract would be tendered during 2016/17 under EU procurement rules and will begin in May 2018.



A campaign, #OurDay, on the social networking site Twitter, took place at the end of last year. Organised by the Local Government Association, it was a chance for Councils across the country to give residents an insight into what they do everyday.

Using NHDC's Twitter account we took part in the 24 hour 'Tweetathon' – tweeting links and pictures of various Council services, with an emphasis on people carrying out their everyday jobs.

It was as usual, an early start for the bin crews with around 124 tonnes of recycling and 75 tonnes of refuse typically collected on a daily basis and we tweeted pictures of an apprentice cleaning up leaves in the children's play area of Howard Park, Letchworth. Customer Services took over 400 calls that day and Community Development Officers spoke to grant applicants in preparation for a Committee meeting.

Hertfordshire Careline took about 1000 calls from vulnerable

people, including life critical emergencies on #OurDay. Tweets continued throughout the day letting followers know about an Environmental Crime Officer's visit to Weston Hills, following reports of someone cutting down and taking trees, as well as the Council's Head of Service for Environmental Health attending the LGA conference on the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014.

Getting out this steady stream of Tweets throughout the day was a really good way to let our 5,500 followers know what goes on in an average day at the Council.



Follow us on Twitter
@NorthHertsDC



Get Fit and Active

in North Herts



Activities for the over 65s in North Herts. Sessions include:



- Stroke Rehabilitation
- Diabetes and Obesity
- Chronic Lower Back Care
- Cancer Rehabilitation
- Water confidence
- Swimming Lessons
- Walking Football
- Multi-Sport Sessions
- Chair Aerobics
- Exercise Classes



Contact your local centre for further details.

A range of memberships also available to suit you. Contact your local centre.



Hitchin Swimming Centre

Fishponds Road, Hitchin,
Herts SG5 1HA

01462 437111

E. hitchin@stevenage-leisure.co.uk

Royston Leisure Centre

Woodcock Road, Royston,
Herts SG8 7XT

01763 255190

E. royston@stevenage-leisure.co.uk

North Herts Leisure Centre

Baldock Road, Letchworth,
Herts SG6 2ER

01462 679311

E. letchworth@stevenage-leisure.co.uk

www.stevenage-leisure.co.uk

24-hour Customer Information Line: 0300 012 0300



Children can swim for FREE

Buy one Adult ticket and get one child
ticket FREE at any of the above centres*

*During public sessions only. Upon payment of full price adult ticket.
Expires 31st March 2015. Terms & Conditions apply.
No photocopies accepted or cash alternative.
Only one voucher per household.

FREE SQUASH

OFF PEAK & WEEKENDS ONLY*

This voucher entitles the bearer to 1 free
SQUASH session at **North Herts Leisure
Centre only.**

*Week days Mon - Fri before 5pm or any time at Weekends.
Expires 31st March 2015. Terms & Conditions apply. No photocopies
accepted or cash alternative. Only one voucher per household.

Improvement project for North Herts Leisure Centre



An improvement project for North Herts Leisure Centre (NHLC) is on the cards following a decision by the Council's Cabinet to invest in major renovations and upgrades to the facility.

Councillors agreed to the £3.1 million development project, subject to tenders being within agreed budgets. The proposed programme of refurbishments, which include the construction of an extension to the centre which is now 32 years old, will not only offer better customer experience but will extend the centre's expected lifespan.

The plans include a new learner/teaching pool and refurbishment of the changing rooms. There will also be a new dance studio, offices and sports hall flooring. A new, better located café will allow customers to have refreshments while viewing the new teaching pool and additional parking spaces will be provided.

Work has started in developing the scheme and work on the ground is due to start late summer of this year, subject to formal approval of a detailed business case and tender from Stevenage Leisure Ltd later in the year. The aim is for the development to be completed and open to the public by Spring/Summer 2016. Keep up to date with progress on the NHDC website.



MAKING A SPLASH IN BANCROFT RECREATION GROUND

Work to create a new water splash park, toilet and baby changing facility in Bancroft Recreation Ground, Hitchin, looks set to start this Autumn.

The Council was unsuccessful in its application for funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund for redeveloping the whole park earlier this year, however despite this setback, works on a smaller scale will still take place. It was clear from extensive consultation with the Hitchin community earlier in 2014, that an interactive water splash feature would be one of the most favoured ways forward.

On approving plans for the splash park, members of the Council's Cabinet expressed that they wanted

to offer more opportunities for the wide range of people who use the recreation ground and provide something that benefits the significant number of younger families living in the town.

Earlier this year, the public were asked to give their comments on the proposals and feedback will now be used to refine the specification for the site. Work is due to commence in Autumn ready for next year, avoiding the busy Summer holidays when many people visit the park.



SEE SOMETHING SAY SOMETHING



If you are worried about the welfare of a family member, friend, neighbour or colleague, it can be confusing to know where to turn. Fortunately in Hertfordshire, a range of local and national organisations are on hand to help.

All the organisations below have comprehensive websites with lots of useful and supportive information. Some also allow you to make contact or report incidents online.

Please do not call NHDC if you are concerned about the welfare of a child or an adult. The organisations below should be able to assist you:

The NSPCC and Childline

www.nspcc.org.uk /
www.childline.org.uk



Childline provide support to children and young people experiencing abuse or bullying on their free to call phone number 0800 1111.

The NSPCC also support adults who are concerned about a child or young person. Contact their helpline 24 hours a day, 365 days a year on 0808 800 5000. You can choose to remain anonymous if you wish.

Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults

www.hertssafeguarding.org.uk



Adult safeguarding relates to the need to protect people over the age of 18 years who may be in vulnerable circumstances. These are adults in need of care and support, who may be at risk of abuse or neglect due to the actions (or lack of action) of another person.

In Hertfordshire, local services work together to identify people at risk and put measures in place to help

prevent abuse or neglect and to protect people. If you are concerned about a vulnerable adult:

- Call Hertfordshire County Council's Adult Care Services on 0300 123 4042 (24 hour service).
- Contact the Care Quality Commission on 03000 616 161 if the adult is living in a registered care home or receiving home care services.
- Let a professional know such as a social worker, community or district nurse or GP. They can advise you what to do next.

Safeguarding Children

www.hertssafeguarding.org.uk

If you suspect a child or young person is being abused, as a concerned member of the public you can make a referral in the strictest confidence. If you suspect for any reason that a child is being mistreated, please contact:

- Hertfordshire County Council's Children's Services on 0300 123 4043 (24 hour service).
- The Child Abuse Investigation Unit within the Police on 101.

Domestic Abuse

www.hertssunflower.org



One in six men and one in four women experience domestic abuse. Herts Sunflower provide a Hertfordshire Domestic Violence and Abuse freephone helpline on 08 088 088 088 (10am-10pm Monday-Friday). They support people experiencing abuse

within the home including sexual assault and rape, honour based abuse and forced marriage.

Young minds mental health support

www.youngminds.org.uk



Young minds offer information on child and adolescent mental health for parents and professionals. They can be called Monday to Friday 9.30am-4pm on 0808 802 5544.

MIND Infoline

www.mind.org.uk

Provides information on a range of topics including types of mental health problems, where to get help in your local area, medication and alternative treatments. Lines are open 9am-6pm, Monday to Friday on 0300 123 3393.

Samaritans

www.samaritans.org



The Samaritans provide a confidential helpline for people who want to talk to someone about issues that are troubling them. It doesn't matter who you are, how you feel or what has happened. If you feel things are getting to you, Samaritans want you to get in touch. Lines are open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year on 08457 909090, or call 01462 455333 for face to face appointments at the local office.

Remember if there is a danger to life, risk of injury or a crime is taking place, always call the police on 999.



Ground-breaking alliance

North Hertfordshire District Council's community alarm service, Hertfordshire Careline, has launched an exciting partnership with Hertfordshire County Council and the award winning Hertfordshire Community Meals, to expand its range of independent living services to Hertfordshire residents.

The partnership will help older and vulnerable people across the county benefit from a community alarm or telecare service at a substantially discounted price.

A community alarm or telecare can help you, a relative, a friend, or a neighbour

Assistive technology can provide much needed reassurance for users and their friends, families, and carers, as they know help is on hand at the press of a button, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. With this new one stop-shop service, older and vulnerable people will benefit from a convenient, locally based not-for-profit organisation, that has provided these services for over thirty years.

Hertfordshire Careline currently provides support for around 20,000 people and takes a staggering 1,000 calls a day – at least one third of these are life critical emergencies. A service like Hertfordshire Careline is becoming more and more vital, as people are living longer but often suffer the effects of poor health as they do so.

A single point of help

The partnership will enable members of the public, carers, health or social care professionals from across the county to access a range of subsidised, independent living solutions provided by Hertfordshire Careline. Working in collaboration with Hertfordshire County Meals, these telecare services can be up and running within a matter of a few days – there are no up front costs or need to enter into a long term contract.

For more information about community alarms in Hertfordshire visit www.care-line.co.uk, call 0300 999 2 999, or email careline@north-herts.co.uk

Dealing with anti-social behaviour

Fortunately, we have low incidences of anti-social behaviour (ASB) in North Hertfordshire however it is something that the Council takes very seriously. ASB is defined as any deliberate conduct that can cause people to feel harassed, alarmed or distressed.

We deal with complaints about a wide range of ASB, including noise nuisance, dog fouling, graffiti and fly-tipping. We have an online reporting form on our website and you can find out more about the types of ASB that we deal with by searching for 'anti-social behaviour' at www.north-herts.gov.uk, or you can call us on 01462 474000.

Recently, new powers have been introduced to enable victims of ASB to ask for cases to be reviewed. If a resident, or group of residents, are experiencing ASB and feel that appropriate action is not being taken, they now have the right to request a review of their case. The case review is called the 'Community Trigger'.

The trigger introduces a right for victims, or victims' representatives, to ask local agencies to review how they have responded to previous complaints and consider what further action might be taken.

A Community Trigger can be applied for if the following thresholds are met:

- Three reports have been made from an individual about separate incidents in six months or;
- Three individuals have separately reported similar incidents in six months.

For more information search for 'Community Trigger' at www.north-herts.gov.uk, contact NHDC's ASB Officer on 01462 474298 or email communitysafety@north-herts.gov.uk

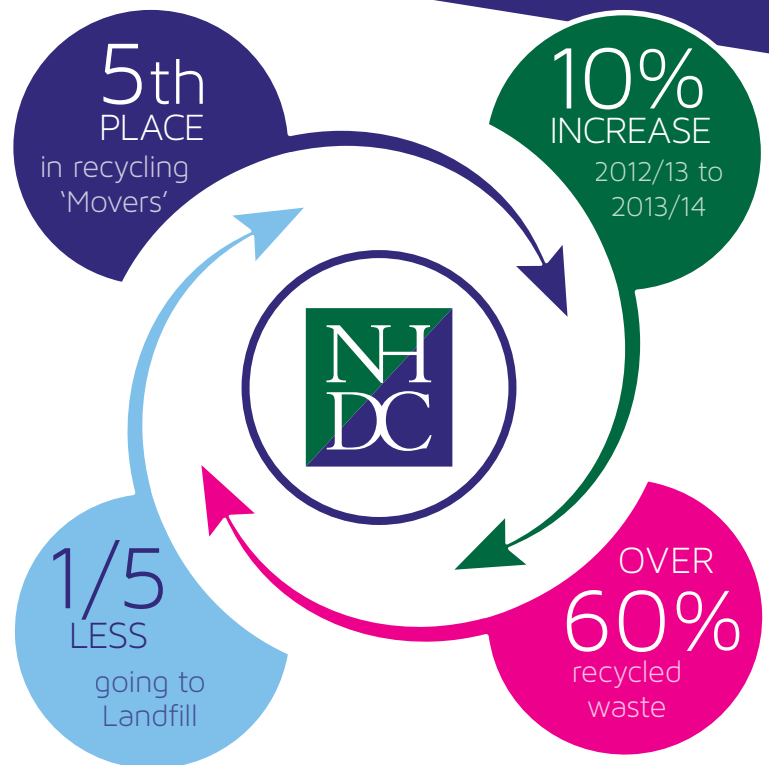


WASTE & RECYCLING

Recycling rates are on the *move!*

NHDC has landed fifth place in the top ten of 'movers' according to the latest local authority recycling figures published last month.

Recycling figures increased by 10% from 2012/2013 to 2013/2014, with an impressive 57% of your waste being recycled, meaning a fifth less going to landfill for that period. Since the results were calculated, the recycling figure is even higher and you are now recycling over 60% of your waste – a fantastic effort!



If in doubt, leave it out!

Despite excellent progress, did you know that some recycling is rejected and goes to landfill because it is dirty, wet or contains the wrong items? This costs Council tax payers thousands of pounds, as well as being bad for the environment.

Some people may put in the wrong items with the best intentions, hoping they can be recycled, unaware that they may not be accepted at the recycling factory.

Please avoid putting general waste, packaging with heavy food residue, or bottles with liquid still inside, in your grey

mixed recycling bin. A quick rinse in used washing up water is usually sufficient to dislodge any heavy food residue. If you're not sure if something can be recycled please leave it out, refer to our website or call us on 0800 328 6023 to ask. Every tonne of waste that is successfully recycled helps to control the waste element of your council tax so is well worth the effort!



Are you having a wardrobe clear out after winter?

Did you know that you can recycle your old clothes on your recycling day? Unfortunately we are still finding some textiles at the sorting plant which have been placed inside the recycling bin, among the other recyclable items. These textiles can't be recycled once at the sorting plant, so need to be removed and stored separately by the crew upon collection. Please place textiles in a tied carrier bag, (not black sack) next to your grey recycling bin. Acceptable items include clean, dry clothing, paired shoes, accessories such as handbags and belts, curtains and bed linen. No duvets, pillows, rugs or carpets please.





Food waste reminder

Did you know that over a third of the food we buy ends up being thrown away? This costs the average household £470 per year. You can find many ideas on how to use leftovers and random bits of food on www.lovefoodhatewaste.com

Don't forget to use your brown bin for any food that you do need to throw away. Most households will still have their food waste caddy which was issued in 2013, but if

not, any lidded container will do, or you can buy a replacement from many shops. If you wish to use a liner to help keep the container clean, you can purchase any compostable liners as long as they contain the seedling logo. Then just transfer the liner and its contents into the brown bin which will be emptied for composting.



Composting at home

Spring will soon be upon us and gardens will be blooming once again. Subsidised composters are available from £25.97 delivered and a buy one, get one half price offer is still available. Composting at home provides free fertiliser for your plants as well as helping to deal with any extra garden waste that might not fit into your brown bin.

Opening times at Household Waste Recycling Centres

The opening times at the Hertfordshire County Council operated Household Waste and Recycling Centres changed in January. They are now open as follows:

Letchworth

OPEN: Monday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday

All year 10am - 6pm

CLOSED: Tuesday and Wednesday

Royston

OPEN: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Saturday, Sunday

All year 8am - 4pm

CLOSED: Thursday and Friday



Stevenage

OPEN: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Saturday, Sunday

All year 10am - 6pm. Saturdays (Summer only) 8am - 6pm

CLOSED: Thursday and Friday

Details of the HWRCs can be found at <http://www.hertsdirect.org/wasteaware>

Waste and recycling collection calendars

If you need a reminder, calendars for the year ahead are up on our website so search for yours using your address.

Vehicle access on collection days

We have recently been unable to access some roads due to cars parking on corners, meaning that our collection vehicles cannot visit all properties scheduled for that day. Please be mindful of where you park on collection days. If our vehicles cannot get through it is likely an emergency vehicle wouldn't be able to either.



WEEE event

Our next event to collect your unwanted small electrical items will be held in Woodside Car park, Hitchin on 18 April. You can also bring long any unwanted textiles to be re-used. See our website for further details.



HELPING COMMUNITY PROJECTS

NHDC has a track record of helping community groups and not-for-profit organisations around North Hertfordshire, by providing financial support for projects that benefit communities.

The grants, awarded through local Area Committees could be used to kick start a project or advance an existing project to a new exciting stage. Some of the grants recently awarded include:

A charity which gives vital assistance to stroke victims and their families received a grant for £1,000 to help towards the costs of their support services. **HITCHIN STROKE GROUP**, which was founded in the early 1990s, aims to improve the speech of stroke victims, as well as give them a chance to socialise each week in a supportive environment. They also provide opportunities for carers to get some respite for a few hours.

A firework display in Baldock went off with a bang, thanks to a £1,500 grant, together with additional generous support from local organisations. The event run by **BALDOCK TOWN PARTNERSHIP** was the second public display hosted in Baldock for 30 years. It attracted around 2000 visitors, with a host of live music to entertain spectators, fair rides and a variety of cuisine on offer from food vendors.

“
The grants, awarded through local Area Committees could be used to kick start a project or advance an existing project to a new exciting stage.
”

There was dancing in **ROYSTON AND DISTRICT MUSEUM** after they received a grant of £500 to offer free mother and toddler dance workshops. The dance experts used a unique combination of the museum's collection, dance moves and music in a fantastic way for the very youngest members of our community to make the museum their own.

CHILD UK's Friday Night Project started up in Letchworth after receiving a grant for £1,500. The initiative provides opportunities for young people to take part in a wide variety of sporting activities on Friday nights. As well as fun activities, the 11 to 19 year olds take part in on-site workshops on sexual health, healthy lifestyle choices and substance misuse prevention.

A newly formed charity which supports young carers aged between eight and 18 received £3,500. **HERTS YOUNG CARERS** give emotional and practical help to young people who are caring for someone who is ill or disabled. They meet fortnightly in a fun and safe environment, to relax and have fun, take part in

sports, arts and crafts as well as various trips. The group have the opportunity to meet other young carers and get support from the volunteers.

NORTH HERTS CENTRE FOR VOLUNTARY SERVICE'

got a big lift when it received a grant of £2,900 to replace the charity's van for its Furniture Link project. The new van picks up donations of second hand furniture and displays it in its Letchworth showroom where it can be purchased. The project helps to provide low cost furniture and offers discounts to people who receive benefit assistance.

All projects must meet strict criteria before they receive an Area Committee grant. If you would like to know more search for 'Area Committee Grants' at www.north-herts.gov.uk or call the Community Development Team on 01462 474 000.



Election Fever

Preparations began in January for the UK Parliamentary elections which will take place on 7 May 2015, alongside the scheduled Local Government elections.

This includes the election of 16 Councillors to North Hertfordshire District Council and elections to several parish councils in the area. Approximately 350 people will be recruited to help run the elections. Counting for the North East Hertfordshire Parliamentary Constituency will start straight after polling stations close at 10pm on 7 May. Local Government elections will be counted from 2pm the next day.

Polling stations throughout the District will be open from 7am to 10pm. If you can't go to the

polling station, a postal or proxy vote can be arranged please contact the Council for details. All completed new applications for proxy voting must be received by 5pm on Tuesday 28 April. For those wanting to vote by post, deadlines for receiving new postal vote and proxy applications is 5pm on 21 April.

A full list of candidates for parliamentary, district and parish elections will be available on the NHDC website on the evening of Thursday 9 April.

If you are not registered to vote and wish to vote in the elections on 7 May, the registration deadline is 20 April. You can now register to vote online at www.gov.uk/register-to-vote

There is lots of information about elections on the NHDC website or you can email elections@north-herts.gov.uk or call 01462 474503.

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE MUSEUM

Excitement is mounting as the new North Hertfordshire Museum begins to take shape. Building work is coming on extremely well, and some rooms are already being decorated in readiness for the new showcases. Photos showing progress of the project are regularly posted to the Council's Flickr pages, in the album *North Hertfordshire Museum/Hitchin Town Hall*.

Over 1200 local items will be displayed in the museum, from a mammoth tusk, to a train wheel pattern from the K & L foundry.

The museum will be on two floors, with lift access at all levels. A downstairs gallery will show the chronological development of North Hertfordshire from prehistoric times onwards, next to the main temporary exhibition gallery. Upstairs will be a large gallery, where everything is arranged by theme. This will allow us to group objects from the different towns and villages of the District together in one place, and we hope that there will be something to interest everyone, young and old. The main themes are 'Living off the Land',

'House & Home', 'Fun & Games', 'Making & Selling', 'Connections', 'Peace & Conflict' and 'Cradle to Grave'.

Outside the main gallery there is a completely new floor, linking across from the old Gymnasium building to Hitchin Town Hall. This is the Terrace Gallery, and it will include material from our important football, art and Suffragette collections. NHDC is most grateful to the Heritage Lottery Fund for generously supporting this project. We anticipate that the Museum will open in the autumn.

NHDC IS MOST GRATEFUL TO THE HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND FOR GENEROUSLY SUPPORTING THIS PROJECT.



Barkway Football Pavilion kicks off with a celebration



A launch event to officially celebrate the opening of the new state-of-the-art pavilion and community room at Barkway recreation ground, near Royston took place in January.

Sir Oliver Heald MP performed the ribbon cutting ceremony and NHDC's Leader, Cllr Lynda Needham, Cllr Tony Hunter and Chairman, Cllr Tricia Cowley also attended the event.

The project, which has taken four years to complete, was made possible thanks to a £50,000 grant

from NHDC's Parish Amenity Capital Improvement Fund (PACIF) and up to £40,100 from its Section 106 fund. Additional funding for the project was donated by the Premier League and The FA Facilities Fund and also raised through initiatives inspired by the project's committee.

The pavilion now benefits from two changing rooms, an official's room with showers and a community room complete with kitchen and disabled facilities. The project has been managed by the Barkway

Pavilion Project Committee in support of Barkway Parish Council's partnership with Royston Town Football Club.



Completion of Nature Reserve improvement project

A double celebration, marking the completion of improvements to Purwell Meadows and the 20th anniversary of the site being designated a Local Nature Reserve, took place on the banks of the River Purwell in Hitchin in December.

The project to enhance the Nature Reserve was jointly funded by Veolia Environmental Trust, Hertfordshire County Council and NHDC and was led by the Countryside Management Service (CMS).

Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Cllr Jane Gray and for Environment Cllr Peter Burt, attended the event which included a guided tour of the area.

As part of the project, boundary hedgerows have been restored, enhancing views across the meadows and improving habitat for hedgerow

wildlife. Entrances have been improved with new gates, surfacing, signage and a panel installed close to the river, beautifully illustrating the wildlife of the meadows.

The restoration of the banks of the River Purwell, which provide habitat for key species such as water voles and wetland habitat, has improved the conditions for wildlife to flourish, particularly birds such as snipe and mallard. New fencing and corral have been installed so that grazing of the meadows by cattle can continue, keeping meadows open and allowing wildflowers and other wildlife to thrive.

Local volunteers under guidance from CMS have carried out a huge amount of work, resulting in a real benefit for the wildlife and enabling local residents to wander around and appreciate all the improvements the area.



The opening event at Purwell Meadows in December

“As part of the project, boundary hedgerows have been restored, enhancing views across the meadows and improving habitat for hedgerow wildlife.”



Take the allotment challenge this spring

Have you ever wanted to grow your own fruit and vegetables? Now is your chance!

Both aspiring and expert gardeners will be pleased to learn that a number of allotments are available to rent at low cost in Letchworth, Hitchin and Baldock.

People with a passion for growing their own fruit and vegetables will already know that now is the perfect time to start clearing allotments, ready for planting and sowing. This ensures allotment holders get the full potential from the plot from the outset and by harvest time, will be reaping the benefits of home grown food.

NHDC's allotments come in all shapes and sizes and offer the chance to take part in an activity that is fun for all the family and a great way to exercise. An allotment can also help to save money by



providing cheap fresh fruit and vegetables that encourage a healthy diet.

Why not take the allotment challenge for yourself? For more information search for 'Allotments' on NHDC's website at www.north-herts.gov.uk or call 01462 474000

MOUNDS OF FUN AT HITCHIN PLAY AREA

A project to completely redesign and redevelop the popular play area at Ransom's Recreation Ground in Hitchin was completed earlier this year.

Groundwork, who carried out the work on behalf of NHDC, consulted with the local community before working on the designs so they could take on board ideas from local children, young people and their parents. The result is a space that they really want to use.

New playful landscapes and land forms encourage children to use their imaginations to create their own games and include mounds to scale as well as things to hide in and climb over. Incorporating natural play and free play principles offers a more challenging activity within an inviting setting. A 'mega tyre swing' has also been added along with a variety of swings for different age ranges. Other enhancements include a climbing wall and a fenced toddler area. The tractor climbing feature, which has been a favourite of park users in the past, has now been restored and re-installed and there have been improvements to the new ball-court goals.



Update on the Draft Local Plan

Details of the Draft Local Plan are published on the Council's website www.north-herts.gov.uk/localplan

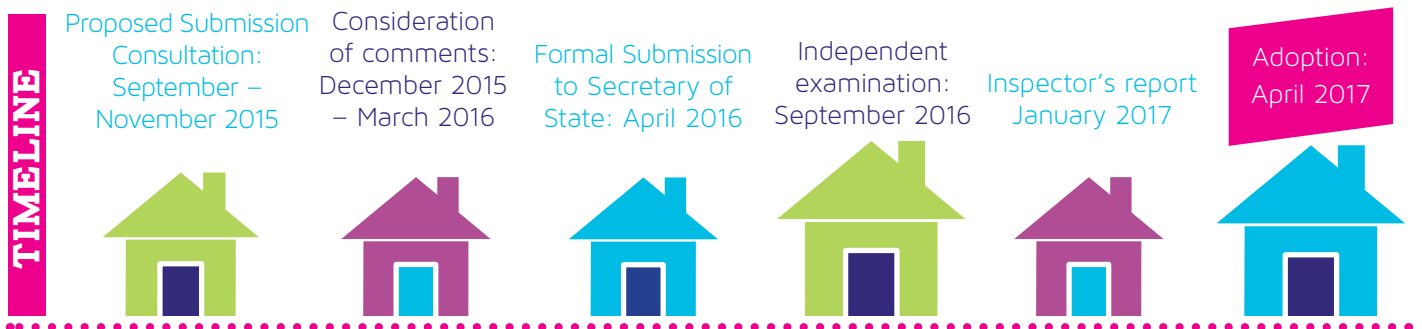


The Council has received a fantastic response to the public consultation on the Preferred Options of the Draft Local Plan. The Plan, which will cover the period 2011-2031, will set targets for new homes, employment and retail development, and

identify areas of land where these developments should be built. It will also consider what infrastructure is needed to support development.

Between December and early February, residents were able to express their views on the

Preferred Options. The results, which are now being analysed, will be used to prepare the final version of the Draft Local Plan and this will be put forward, following a further consultation, to be examined by the Planning Inspectorate next year.



Thought home ownership was out of your reach? Think again...

With house prices and mortgage lender deposit requirements climbing, it is no wonder that in recent years, it has become almost impossible for many first time buyers to get a foot on the property ladder.

If you want to purchase a home but can't afford to buy on the open market, Help to Buy, a government scheme created to help people take their first steps into home ownership, could be the solution for you. There are a number of different products within the scheme that are designed to make buying a home more affordable, whether you are a first time buyer or looking to move up the housing ladder.

A popular product for those struggling to afford outright purchase is Shared Ownership,

offering the opportunity to buy an initial share in a property that you can afford, helping you into home ownership in manageable stages. The rent charged on the remaining share is subsidised, meaning that the combined monthly cost of mortgage and rent is normally substantially less than if you were buying the property outright.

For some buyers, the most difficult hurdle is to raise the required deposit. Help to Buy has an ideal solution to this through their Equity Loans. The Government can lend you up to 20% of the cost of a new-build home, so that you'll only need a 5% cash deposit and 75% mortgage to make up the rest.

A roadshow is being held on May 16 2015 at the Ramada (The Comet),



St Albans Road West, Hatfield AL10 9RH between 10.30am – 4pm where there will be details on all of the Help to Buy products, how the legal process works and details on what homes are available in and around Hertfordshire.

For more information, to apply for shared ownership, or find out about other events please contact 0333 214044 or visit www.helptobuyese.org.uk



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The Council is committed to ensuring we have a thriving, vibrant and prosperous economy going forward in North Hertfordshire. To help achieve this vision, we are now consulting on a draft Economic Development Strategy for the district - 'Productive North Herts.'

'Productive North Herts' will be specifically targeted at businesses and key economic stakeholders, although we welcome comments from anyone living and working in North Hertfordshire. The Strategy is important as it will set the strategic context for economic development

in North Hertfordshire and begin to identify economic priorities for the council.

The Council has an important role to play in shaping our local economy, but cannot achieve this in isolation. A crucial element of our strategy will be to work in partnership with key stakeholders in the North Hertfordshire economy to support and grow new and existing businesses and to attract inward investment.

We are accepting comments on the draft strategy until 30 March

2015. Your feedback and comments will inform the final strategy and associated action plan, due to be published later this year.

For more information and to comment online see www.north-herts.gov.uk/productivenorthherts

Or contact economic.development@north-herts.gov.uk or 01462 474453



COUNCIL MEETINGS—

2 MARCH 2015 TO 30 May 2015 (7.30pm unless stated)

DATE	COMMITTEE	VENUE
Monday 2 March 2015	Baldock & District Committee	Baldock Community Centre, Simpson Drive, Baldock
Tuesday 3 March 2015	Hitchin Committee	Westmill Community Centre, John Barker Place, Hitchin
Wednesday 4 March 2015	Royston & District Committee	Royston Town Hall, Melbourn Street, Royston
Wednesday 11 March 2015	Letchworth Committee	Committee Room 1 / 2
Thursday 12 March 2015	Southern Rural Committee	Committee Room 1 / 2
Tuesday 17 March 2015	Overview & Scrutiny Committee	Council Chamber
Wednesday 18 March 2015	Finance, Audit & Risk Committee	Committee Room 1 / 2
Thursday 19 March 2015	Planning Control Committee	Council Chamber
Tuesday 24 March 2015	Cabinet	Council Chamber
Wednesday 25 March 2015	Joint Staff Consultative Committee (3.00pm)	Committee Room 1
Thursday 9 April 2015	Council	Council Chamber
Thursday 23 April 2015	Planning Control Committee	Icknield Centre (Elim Church), Icknield Way, Letchworth Garden City
Thursday 21 May 2015	Annual Council	Council Chamber
Tuesday 26 May 2015	Hitchin Committee	Westmill Community Centre, John Barker Place, Hitchin
Thursday 28 May 2015	Planning Control Committee	Council Chamber

NHDC is committed to equal opportunities and our aim is to make our services easy for all residents to use. If English is not your first language or you have difficulty reading this document please contact us to discuss how we may be able to assist you.

Please call: 01462 474000, or email service@north-herts.gov.uk Textphone (for textphone users) on: 01462 474800



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**Tel 01462 474552
email outlook@north-herts.gov.uk**

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“ MAKING NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE A VIBRANT PLACE TO LIVE, WORK AND PROSPER ”



MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES

HITCHIN

British Schools Museum

41/42 Queen Street, Hitchin, SG4 9T
01462 420144

www.hitchinbritishschools.org.uk

EXHIBITIONS

17 February - 7 July

Jill Grey - Life and Legacy

This exhibition celebrates the life of Hitchin's heritage hero Jill Grey. Collector, curator, code breaker, correspondent and campaigner, Jill's story will amaze and inspire you.

ROYSTON

Royston Museum

5 Lower King Street, Royston, SG8 5AL
01763 242587

www.roystonmuseum.org.uk

Opening hours 10am - 5pm every Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday

EXHIBITIONS

Running until 14 March

Jack's War

This exhibition takes a look at a Royston lad, Jack Halstead who kept a diary throughout WWI. Including sketches, his diary gives a first hand account of the war.

Running until 4 April

History of Scouting

Royston Scouts have created their own exhibition looking at the history of scouting in the area.

OTHER EVENTS

HITCHIN

4 April

Easter Treasure Hunt Train

Departing from the Market Place, come for a ride on the land train, find the treasure en-route and win a prize!

26 April: 10am - 4pm

Hitchin District Scouts St George's Day Parade

Parade of Hitchin District Scout members to celebrate St George's Day, parading in the afternoon between Bancroft Gardens and the Market Square. A colourful spectacular to watch and an opportunity for the town to see such a great organisation.

Contact: Kevin Hankin, 07795 244125

11 April

Classic Car Show

Relive the past with these lovingly cared for vehicles - on the Market Place and down by the Riverside

4 May

May Day Gala

Market stalls, buskers and a Maypole! Browse, sing and dance on the Market Place and in the High Street this Bank Holiday.

30 May: 12 noon

Hitchin Fashion Show

Watch models strut their stuff, as the independent clothes stores showcase their fashion on the Market Place.

ROYSTON

4 April: 10am - 12.30pm

Easter Chocolate Trail, Royston Town Centre

2 - 4 May

Royston Parish Church of St John the Baptist - Second-hand Book Fair

Saturday (10.30am - 4.30pm); Sunday (12pm - 4.30pm), Monday (10.30am - 4.30pm)

Tea and cakes will be available each afternoon. Proceeds will go to the Church fund

4 May: 12pm - 4.30pm

May Fayre, Priory Memorial Gardens

4 May: 11.30am - 3.30pm

Historic Vehicle Show, Royston Civic Centre Car Park

17 May 2015: 10.30am

Family Summer Fun Run, Royston Leisure Centre

Families can jog, walk, toddle or take a pushchair ride around a 3km guided route with no time limit. £3 per child aged 2 years and over. £1 per adult and children aged 1 year old. Under 1's free of charge but must be registered. Call Gemma Crosk on 01462 474560 or email gemma.crosk@north-herts.gov.uk

24 May: 12pm - 7pm

Beer Festival, Royston Town Football Club, Garden Walk

LETCWORTH GARDEN CITY

Third Saturday of every month: 9am - 1pm

Farmers' Market, Leys Square, Leys Avenue

For further Love Letchworth events see www.shopleetchworth.com

BALDOCK

14 March, 11 April, 9 May

Farmers and crafts market

16 May

Baldock Festival Street Market

See www.baldocktown.co.uk for event listings

ASHWELL

10 May: 11am - 5pm

Ashwell at Home

www.ashwellathome.org.uk

The theme is 'Secret Ashwell' and attractions include: open gardens, music for all tastes, free workshops for children, displays and exhibitions including an archaeological dig test site, basket weaving and Morris dancers. Tickets are £6 for adults, under 18s free. Free parking.

