

Widford Parish Council

Minutes of the Widford Ordinary Parish Council Meeting
Tuesday 9th November 2021 at 7.30pm at Widford Village Hall



PRESENT: Cllr Mike Allen (MA); Cllr Ian Collins (IC); Cllr Babs Edwards (BE);

Four members of the public

Clerk: Colin Marks, Clerk to the Parish Council

The Chairman welcomed everyone and opened the meeting at 7.30pm

ACTION

21.096 To receive and approve apologies for absence

1. Councillors: Cllr Michael Ripsher (away); Cllr Mark Rome (Work): **Approved**
2. Others: Cllr Eric Buckmaster, PCSO Leon DeBruyn

21.097 Declarations of Interest and requests for dispensations

1. Interests

As noted on the agenda: Cllr Babs Edwards: an interest and a dispensation in respect of Playing Field matters, her husband being Treasurer of the PFMC. Cllr Mike Allen has an interest and a dispensation in re Playing Field matters, being a trustee.

2. Dispensation requests: None

21.098 Approval of Minutes

RESOLVED: that the Minutes of the Ordinary Parish Council Meeting held on 7th September 2021 were a true and accurate record. The Chairman signed the Minutes.

21.099 Police report

The Chairman read the following report from PCSO Leon De Bruyn sent on 30th October:

There are no crimes to report back to you for the month of October

However there has been a recent increase in Thefts from motor vehicle, which is not unusual as we approach the festive season, so we are urging residents to ensure cars are locked (even if they are parked on a driveway), to remove all valuable items from within and to ensure that the car key is out of range should their vehicle be 'keyless entry'.

There will also be an increased presence around Halloween so any reports of ASB should be called in on the police non-emergency number 101.

21.100 Chairman's announcements

The Chairman reported that he had received an enquiry regarding the small parcel of common land outside Chapel House, who owned it and whether it could be sold. The Clerk said he would confirm to the Chairman after the meeting the official status of the land in question.

Clerk/MA

The Chairman also said he would like to add a calendar of village events to the PC website and to see it updated to include more community information. The Chairman and Cllr Ian Collins agreed to work on the website. The Clerk agreed to send them the site access information.

**MA/IC
Clerk**

21.101 Reports by County and District Councillor Eric Buckmaster

The Chairman read extracts from Cllr Buckmaster's October and November reports. It was agreed to include the reports in full as an Appendix to the November Council Meeting Minutes.

Clerk

21.102 Planning

1. New Applications:

3/21/1841/HH & 1842/LBC Abbotts Farm: Demolish porch and rear extension; build single storey front and rear extension to annexe. RECONSULTATION. **RESOLVED: No objections**

Clerk

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- 2. Decision Notices.** For information only, the following were noted:
- 3/21/1667/HH 29 Benningfield Road:** Demolish conservatory; build extension. **GRANTED**
 - 3/20/2616/HH & 2617/LBC The Old Rectory:** Replacement extension. **GRANTED**
 - 3/21/2332/HH & 2333/LBC The Old Rectory:** Replacement extension. **WITHDRAWN**
 - 3/21/0858/HH 3A Benningfield Road:** Side, rear and front extensions. **GRANTED**
 - 3/21/0982/HH Linwood:** Front and rear extensions. RECONSULTATION **GRANTED**
 - 3/21/2068/FUL To rear of The Green Man.** Change of use, outbuilding to residential. **GRANTED**
 - 3/21/1384/LBC 2 Elia Cottages:** Install skylights on rear extension. **GRANTED**
 - 3/21/1720/HH 4 Nether Street:** Outbuilding to rear. *Decision awaited*
 - 3/21/1180/HH & 1181/LBC Chestnut Tree Cottage:** Erection of garden room *Awaited*

3. Other planning matters, including items received too late for the agenda

1. Other planning matters

1. Late planning applications: None
2. Concerns were raised about development in Benningfield Road. EHC Planning Enforcement asked for more information. It was agreed that the Clerk should get in touch with Planning Enforcement to clarify.

Clerk

21.103 Finance

1. Report of the Council's accounts to 31st October 2021

Finance Summary

	£
Opening cashbook balance 1 September	35,058.06
Plus: income to 31 October	9,435.03
Minus: expenditure to 31 October	<u>3,207.98</u>
Balance available to Council at 31 October (cashbook balance)	41,285.11
Plus unrepresented cheques/payments	<u>285.00</u>
Bank balance: reconciled with bank statement at 31 October	<u>41,570.11</u>

RESOLVED: that the Accounts Statement to 31st October 2021 be approved.

2. Bank reconciliation

Copies of the bank statement were presented. **RESOLVED: to agree the bank reconciliation as presented.**

3. Performance vs budget to 31st October 2021

The Clerk's detailed report on the financial performance vs budget to 31st October was received. There were no untoward transactions to note. The VAT reclaim of £631.34 for 2020/21 had been received from HMRC.

RESOLVED: that the financial performance report to 31st October 2021 be accepted as presented.

4. List of payments.

RESOLVED: to approve the list of payments as presented by the Clerk

Clerk

All expenditure made under the General Power of Competence.

	TEEC Ltd	Website hosting and domain fee	151.19	25.20
	Caroline Parrott	Closed churchyard 4 of 4	310.00	
	Clerk	Expenses October-November	17.75	
	Clerk reimbursement	Flash drive	9.00	
	Royal British Legion	Poppy wreath	50.00	
	Jo English	Litterpicking November: 8 of 12	125.00	
	Clerk	Salary November	400.37	
	HMRC	PAYE November	100.00	
	Citizens Advice Service	Donation	100.00	
	Recoverable VAT included			25.20

5. Draft budget and precept for 2022/23

The Clerk had prepared a draft budget and precept for 2022/23; this was considered by the Council.

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Mrs Jill Buck, as a member of the PCC, informed the Council that, having spoken to the Clerk, the PCC is having the Closed Churchyard trees safety checked and any quotes received will be forwarded for the Parish Council's consideration. Mrs Buck also said that Lady Parker will no longer be arranging for some of the larger bushes and trees to be maintained and therefore that responsibility will inevitably fall on the Parish Council in future. The Clerk reiterated that any tree work quotes should be accompanied by a tree safety report and confirmed that the Parish Council is responsible for tree safety in the Closed Churchyard. He also confirmed that tree maintenance work can only be arranged by the Parish Council, not least of all in order that VAT can be reclaimed. It was also noted that the Parish Council is responsible for the safety of gravestones and churchyard maintenance, but not for the boundary wall, the lychgate, or the church building. It was agreed to take any tree survey into account when the 2022/23 budget is finalised in January. The Parish Council may make its own arborist enquiries.

RESOLVED: To agree the draft budget as presented and that the precept be set at £15,000, subject to any new information becoming available; the final budget and precept to be approved at the January 2022 Parish Council Meeting. Clerk

6. Additional bank signatory

RESOLVED: That Cllr Ian Collins be added to the Unity Trust bank mandate as an authorising signatory. Clerk

7. Citizens Advice Service donation

RESOLVED: That as last year, a donation of £100 be made to the Citizens Advice Service. Clerk

21.104 Correspondence: The list of correspondence was noted as it appeared on the Agenda:

- PFMC: Biffa grant issues (21.105.2.2)
- Parishioner: Concerns at building development in Benningfield Road (21.102.3.2)
- Student: re ACV information
- Wareside councillor: re sale of Glebe land
- PCC: re churchyard grant- receipt and note of thanks
- PCC: re tree survey, Closed Churchyard (21.105.4.1)
- EHC: parish litter bin audit and problem bins (21.106.3.1)
- HAPTC re QGC grant availability (21.108)
- Parishioner: re damage to verge and footpath by HGVs opposite Long Meadow development (21.106.2.3)

21.105 Village Reports

1. Village Hall and archive.

Archive

No report was given. A member of the VH committee asked that the Archive issue be disconnected from the Village Hall as it is really a separate matter.

Village Hall

The AGM is on 10th November. A pub evening is planned for 19th November which, if successful, could become a regular feature on the first Friday of each month.

There was a discussion on the possible relocation of the Village Hall to the Playing Field, although there are concerns that this might not be possible under the Playing Field Managing Trustees governing document. If the move were possible, there would also need to be public consultation. It was requested that the Village Hall Chairman be invited to the January Parish Council meeting to present a case.

MA

2. Playing Field

1. **Report:** There have been several successful events recently, including the car boot sale, the summer party, a Halloween event, and the equine car boot sale.

MA

2. **Biffa grant.** Update on the possibility of the Parish Council entering into a lease agreement with the PFMC: No progress has been made; the Clerk agreed to speak to an HAPTC recognised charity/council solicitor to establish the position.

Clerk

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3. **Additional dog bin request:** Since EHC are not currently extending their dog or litter bin contracts, it was agreed not to pursue this at the present time.

3. Allotments

Nothing to report

BE

4. Closed Churchyard.

Refer to the matter of tree safety as discussed and recorded under budget item 21.103.5 above

Clerk
Clerk

21.106 Highways, Public Rights of Way, and other Parish matters

1. Footpaths and PRoW.

1. FP1: it was noted that Nicholas Maddex is getting a quote for replacing the stile with a suitable bollard. No update available.

2. FP18: Fallen tree at Lilley Bridge. The tree is being removed. Nicholas Maddex reported that the foundations of the bridge are in poor condition. He is getting it surveyed and will report in due course. No update available.

2. Highways and footways

1. Verges, gutters and overgrown footways: Ongoing.

2. Broken BT Manhole cover, Ware Road: Now repaired.

3. Damage to verge and footpath by HGVs opposite Long Meadow development: The site manager has helpfully said that once the development work has been completed, all damage will be reinstated to a high standard.

3. Other parish matters and concerns

1. EHC parish litter bin audit and to notify EHC of any emptying issues: Noted.

21.107 Benningfield Green

Photos to be taken of any issues; there have been complaints about a bright security light that should be addressed.

IC

21.108 Queen's Green Canopy

150 trees have been ordered for delivery in March – this is probably too many and the order needs to be adjusted. Allotment tenants will decide where best to place them and hopefully be able to get children from the school to get involved. The possibility of a £350 grant is being looked at.

IC

21.109 Neighbourhood Plan

No update.

MA

21.110 Urgent matters received too late for inclusion on this agenda:

A resident had raised concerns about speeding through the village. PCSO Leon DeBruyn had previously asked for information. The question of whether the Police & Crime Commissioner could support traffic calming initiatives was discussed. The Clerk agreed to give Cllr Ian Collins the PCSO's contact details for him to follow up.

Clerk/IC

Suspension of Meeting for Public Comments: No comments made.

21.111 Items for future agendas: None raised.

21.112 Date of next Parish Council meeting

Tuesday 11th January 2022 at 7.30pm: Village Hall venue to be confirmed subject to prevailing Covid-19 legislation.

Clerk/MA

There being no further business, the Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 9.40pm.

Signed.....Dated.....

Appendix

County report for Oct 2021

New on-demand bus service launched in Hertfordshire A new on-demand bus service, HertsLynx, is launching in Hertfordshire from 19 September, as part of Hertfordshire County Council's plans to improve transport in the county.

Residents in the east and north of Hertfordshire will be able to use a new app to order a bus pick up and drop off from virtual bus stops along routes where normal bus services are infrequent.

The HertsLynx service is designed to improve connections between rural villages and larger town centres, making it easier for people to get to work or school, go shopping, or travel to appointments, without needing to use a car or taxi.

HertsLynx can be used for travel anywhere in its operating zone, which is centred around Buntingford. There are no fixed routes on the service, instead passengers can be picked up and dropped off at a vast number of stops within this zone. Passengers can also travel to designated locations in the key hub town of Stevenage, Bishop's Stortford, Royston, Baldock, Hitchin and Letchworth.

New SaverCard Plus scheme offers 20-25 year olds half price bus travel

Hertfordshire County Council is encouraging young people between the ages of 20-25 to apply for their brand new SaverCard Plus scheme, which will allow them easier access to employment, education, retail and leisure facilities across the county.

The new scheme launched on Monday 20 September and offers half-price bus travel on all Hertfordshire bus services for as little as £20 a year. This cost would be covered by purchasing just 14 single bus tickets*. For a number of years, Hertfordshire County Council has been operating and funding a scheme that offers half-price bus travel to 11-19 year olds across Hertfordshire, any day of the week, anytime of the day, on single and return journeys. Whilst this scheme will continue, to build on its success the new SaverCard Plus scheme will run for the next 2-3 years, with a plan in place to secure further funding from the DfT's Bus Service Improvement Fund.

Hertfordshire unveils Blueprint to 'Build Back Better' after COVID-19

Cleaner, greener and healthier priorities will be at the heart of a roadmap to lead the county out of the pandemic and make it fit for the future.

From helping pupils catch-up to enabling residents to be fit and healthy to supporting workers and businesses to get back on their feet, the Covid-19 recovery Strategy has something for everyone in Hertfordshire to 'build back better'.

It is in-part under-pinned by a £9.7 million dedicated Covid-19 Recovery Fund to help drive local recovery and an ambition to be innovative in making services the best they can be for residents.

The Covid-19 Recovery Strategy brings together a series of projects designed to support health and wellbeing and economic recovery over the next two years with the new funds being split across three key priority areas: Health and wellbeing, the environment and sustainable growth. Some of these projects are already up and running, and have been embedded into team practice while others are new initiatives that use the Recovery Fund.

Highlights under each of the priorities include:

Health and wellbeing. Adult Care Services projects receiving £3m, including money dedicated to fighting homelessness, alcohol, mental health and domestic abuse. £285,000 will support over 700 adults with disabilities in finding education, work and volunteering opportunities that has been more challenging through the pandemic.

Carer projects, as part of Adult Care Services, will be receiving £258,000 to counter the loneliness, digital exclusion and mental health effects heightened through the pandemic. Funding will enable the council to continue the carers' support package including the Carers' Hub meetings, telephone support offered by Carers in Herts, mentoring, wellbeing and training sessions.

Expanding community protection with £60,000, enabling an increase in Safe and Well visits, targeted at the most vulnerable and disadvantaged Hertfordshire residents. There has been an increase in vulnerability, social isolation and domestic abuse during the covid pandemic. The money allocated will enable more of these 'one stop shop' visits to people's homes, keeping them safer and

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signposting them to further support such as advice on fuel poverty, stopping smoking, weight loss and mental health.

Supporting families in or at risk of falling into poverty with joint programmes between Children Services, Public Health and Adult Care Services. One is the 'Good start in Life' project, receiving £228k over the next two years to develop services for vulnerable families who have become pregnant or have young children during the Covid-19 pandemic. This includes the New Parent Drop in project which will reduce isolation, develop local peer support and support early intervention of physical and mental health needs in families and support parents returning to work with monthly sessions being held in 38 venues across Hertfordshire.

Helping residents stay active and maintain a healthy weight, including a new pilot linking physical activity with good mental health. The Never Too Late campaign aims to increase physical activity for those aged 55 and over, and four-hour activity sessions for young people who receive free school meals. There will also be a pilot with the NHS to explore the role hot food takeaways play in obesity.

Schools 'coming back stronger' and mental health support enabling additional educational psychologists' and Speech and Language capacity to support children and young people and additional investment in counselling schemes to help address the mental health impact of Covid-19 on children and families. £1.2m will be dedicated to these projects.

Addressing inequalities across the county by offering advice on home adaptation, fuel tariffs and managing utilities. There will also be new food welfare initiatives, and work with partner organisations to increase finance/benefits advice to those leaving care of families with disabled children.

The Environment Cutting food waste disposal by raising awareness of the financial and environmental costs. Food waste disposal costs Hertfordshire's taxpayers around £7.1 million each year. The Hertfordshire Food Waste Initiative has been allocated £65,000 as part of a campaign to promote food waste prevention measures to residents.

Restarting Environmental volunteering programmes encouraging residents to get involved to make their county a better place to live and expanding the Hertfordshire Health Walks across the county. It is anticipated this will include wood wardens, health walks and conservation volunteers.

Sustainable Growth. Supporting pupils and schools catch up after the pandemic are a number of initiatives, including £120,000 into a schools mentoring pilot and targeted work with children most at risk of exclusion.

Focussing on residents' wellbeing when considering planning and delivery of growth projects. The initiative involves working closely with the health sector to ensure new developments are places that enhance residents' lives.

Most projects currently fall under the Health and Wellbeing priority, reflecting both how the pandemic has disproportionately impacted needs in this area and the council's aims to address this first. **A recovery roadmap has been developed to structure this work**, setting out the priorities for recovery and rationale for areas of focus. It looks to respond to COVID-19, restore to our pre-pandemic environment and rethink how the council works to deliver services.

The strategy also seeks to modernise operations within the council, to enable staff to deliver a forward-thinking programme of recovery which best addresses residents' needs, and retains and nurtures talent. Proposals are due to be presented at Cabinet Panel on October 1. The final strategy is due to be presented to full council on October 19.

Gritters on standby as winter approaches From 1 October Hertfordshire County Council's fleet of 58 gritters are on standby, ready to spring into action and salt the county's roads when freezing weather approaches. Gritter crews and decision makers from our highways team will be ready around the clock to cover nearly half of Hertfordshire's entire road network – that's more than 1,500 miles (2,500km) – to keep roads open and communities connected.

Hertfordshire County Council Archives uses online technology to enable over 600,000 visitors to discover over 1,000 years of Hertfordshire history. Hertfordshire County Council Archives uses online technology to enable over 600,000 visitors to discover over 1,000 years of Hertfordshire history: Archivists and Repton Red Book

The County Archive contains a collection of historic documents and is a centre for learning and discovery for all generations. It has welcomed over 600,000 online and in person visitors in the past 12 months providing personal, community, social, wellbeing and economic benefits through learning,

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volunteering, creative projects, and partnerships. The physical and virtual doors are open, and everyone is invited.

Hertfordshire Archives & Local Studies (HALS) acts as the 'corporate memory' for Hertfordshire County Council and offers the opportunity to explore over 3 million records on over 7 miles of shelving with material dating from 1060 to the present day and a vast collection of preserved archives, historical documents and printed material. Visitors can see treasured artifacts including the earliest printed book dating from 1602, the smallest book measuring only 14 x 9 centimetres and the largest map covering 12 tables that could seat up to 24 people. There is a full events programme and services details of which can be found at [Events at Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies | Hertfordshire County Council](#)

Fully funded Defibrillators in the Community

A community group in each Division will be able to claim up to £1200 to purchase one defibrillator with support from their Councillor. The County Council has agreed with London Hearts, a charity that support communities with the provision of this form of equipment, that agencies in Hertfordshire can access their reduced rate defibrillators. The types offered by London Hearts are easy and safe to use by anyone with little or no training.

Details regarding how community groups can complete their order and be reimbursed for the funding can be found in the updated guidance from their Councillor.

Invoice for payment must be submitted by Friday 25th February 2022 to guarantee reimbursement. Invoices submitted after Friday 25th February 2022 may be refused reimbursement.

The Government Household Support Fund (HSF)

Hertfordshire County Council will use part of The Government Household Support Fund (HSF) grant to offer families who qualify for free school meal vouchers through the holidays in Hertfordshire this winter

Announced last week, this new grant will run from 06 October 2021 to 31 March 2022 and totals £6,172,064.84 for Hertfordshire. At least 50% of the total funding must be spent on families with children. In terms of type of support, the expectation is that the Household Support Fund should primarily be used to support households in the most need with food, energy and water bills. It can also be used to support households with essential costs related to those items and with wider essential costs.

Just as with the Covid-19 recovery funding, the county council is keen to get the money to support families, which appears in the budgets as a temporary fund, flowing to reach the people of Hertfordshire with the most acute need, right now. Previous schemes funding vouchers to ensure the free school meal provision is not lost during the holidays have been successful.

We can commit to Autumn and Christmas and will review for February based on the success and feedback from families.

Schools will send eligible families the voucher code directly by email, parents do not need to sign up. The email contains instructions on how to claim the voucher, parents are used to this system as it is the same as used over the most recent holiday periods.

the Government support grant is specifically allocated which allows us to work with a range of local partners to make sure Hertfordshire residents get support with things such as household essentials and utility bills, as well as the cost of food.

Supporting early years education, family centres, provision for SEND, school transport, social workers supporting families, domestic abuse support, child protection, adoption, fostering, young people in care, support for families living with disabilities, care for families experiencing emotional and mental health problems.

Since June 2021 the county council has provided:

£240,000 to local food banks and food poverty organisation

£550,000 to families using our early years and family intervention services

allocated £464,850 into crisis support and targeted and specialist support for vulnerable families

£1.3m spent on vouchers over the summer for eligible families.

East Herts Council Grants. The Council is looking for projects that strengthen the community involvement and lead to improved health and wellbeing of residents and recovery after Covid-19.

Earlier this year the council funded 17 organisations and wants to expand and diversify its portfolio of

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projects. Applications are welcomed from people of all backgrounds and particularly from organisations that support vulnerable people, people from black and ethnic minority communities and LGBTQ+ and these groups tend to be under-represented.

As this year are:

- Health for all
- Community issues, including engaging and consulting
- Arts and cultural activities that increase residents' wellbeing

Environmentally sustainable and accessible community buildings and green spaces.

New Winter Wellbeing Manifesto to stay healthy and safe this season launches

Hertfordshire County Council, the local NHS and district council partners, are sharing with residents how they can stay well and keep loved ones safe this winter.

Actions include ways to beat winter viruses, how to stop the spread of them and being prepared if you do get ill. The manifesto comes after vaccination update hits a new high of 84% of Hertfordshire residents aged 35 and over having had their second vaccine.

It is hoped, by following the simple steps and not letting their guard down in the winter months, Hertfordshire residents can do their bit to help prevent a rise in Covid-19 cases which leads to additional pressure on the NHS.

Top things you can do to protect your health and NHS services this winter, which work for colds and flu not just Covid, are:

Keep a well-stocked medicine cabinet at home and check the medicines are in date

Visit your pharmacist (chemist) for advice on medicines or when you are suffering from common ailments that don't need to be seen by a nurse or doctor, such as coughs and colds

Wash your hands thoroughly and regularly with soap and water, especially if you are ill.

Get your Covid-19 jab or booster jab when you are called

Get your flu jab if you're invited to have it. You might be offered both your Covid and flu jab together, that's fine

Get tested - take a rapid 'lateral flow' test twice a week – even if you don't have Covid-19 symptoms.

Follow up with a PCR test if your result is positive. If you test positive you must self-isolate at home for 10 days.

Wear a face covering in crowded places still, where possible. This works for flu and colds not just covid

For colds and flu, rest, keep warm, drink plenty of fluids and take painkillers such as paracetamol and ibuprofen

For sickness and diarrhoea, rest and drink plenty of fluids

Stay away from others for 48 hours after you've had sickness and diarrhoea, particularly care homes and health settings.

Infection control over the coming months is critical to prevent tougher restrictions outlined in the Government's plan B for tackling Covid-19 which would only be enacted if the data suggests further measures are necessary to protect the NHS.

So far, **over 803,300 people in Hertfordshire** have had both their Covid-19 vaccines. HCC and partners are encouraging anyone who is eligible to take up the offer of a Covid-19 vaccination, as this is the best protection against serious illness. This includes getting a booster vaccination or taking up the offer of a third dose, where you have been invited to receive it.

County report for Nov 2021

Construction work has officially started at the new site for The Bishop's Stortford High School in Whittington Way, ahead of the school's move from its current London Road site in Spring

2023. Representatives from the school, Hertfordshire County Council, and local councillors gathered at the site to celebrate the start of construction works, which are being carried out by the county council's contractor, ISG.

The move will see the secondary school relocate to a new, expanded site where it can offer additional places in a modern environment, with further potential to expand in the future to support the proposed scale of new housing growth within the area.

The development of the new school is being funded by the sale of its current site for housing, as well as a £11.2m grant from the Department for Education (DfE) and funding from Hertfordshire County Council.

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The new school buildings are expected to open in Spring 2023.

Review of the Library Service Cabinet agreed to:

cease the transfer of Hertfordshire Library Service to Libraries for Life and for the Library Service to remain in-house with Hertfordshire County Council at this time; and commence the development of new Library Service Strategy in 2022/23, to ensure the Service is best placed to thrive and support Hertfordshire residents and communities over the next ten years. The county council will start developing a new 10 year Library Service Strategy next year. This will build on the current Inspiring Library Strategy 2014-2024, that went on to see over £6m of capital invested in buildings and an estimated £500,000 in technology projects across the county.

Libraries and Lateral Flow test collection. Nine libraries across Hertfordshire have offered assistance to Hertfordshire's Public Health team, by becoming collection points for Lateral Flow Tests (LFT) in their local communities. The libraries which will act as collection points are Baldock, Bishop's Stortford, Hatfield, Hemel Hempstead, Hoddesdon, Oxhey, Rickmansworth, Stevenage, and Watford. They will help ensure as many residents as possible have access to these home test kits, and can stay safe and well this winter.

Electric and zero emission equipment to carry out resurfacing and repairs.

In its ongoing mission to create a cleaner, greener and healthier environment, the county council is trialling all-electric sites, with both plant vehicles and worker facilities powered by electricity. The first local authority in southern England to trial such projects, the footpath reconstruction sites in Letchworth and Stevenage will use electric and zero emission equipment to carry out resurfacing and repairs.

In collaboration with infrastructure partner Ringway, the county council is using an electric mini-excavator, a breaker and a disc cutter, together with a zero-emission staff welfare unit, on sites in Stevenage (The Willows) and Letchworth (Rookes Close).

The sites will help create a healthier environment for both residents and staff, with significant reductions in carbon emissions, improvements in air quality and lower levels of noise pollution. The trial will enable the county council to establish the cost and practicality of using electric equipment and is part of its overall commitment to the Sustainable Hertfordshire Strategy and Action Plan, specifically to be net zero in its operations by 2030 and a net zero county by 2050.

It is part of a wider measurement by the council of the amount of carbon in the products and services that are bought and the development of a strategy to reduce these emissions.

The trial will also look at whether electric equipment and vehicles perform just as well as their fuel-powered counterparts, and benefit from being quieter and less polluting for the workforce who work from a spacious, energy-efficient staff welfare unit, including a rest room, toilets and dry room.

Countryside Rights of Way. CROW does a lot of work county wide working with partner authorities to enhance valuable green spaces and Rights of Way, encouraging volunteers, promoting Health Walks, planting wildflower areas, and working with 'Friends' Groups.

I recently visited a working party in Pishiobury Park in Sawbridgeworth to see some coppicing work to allow some light into a wooded area to encourage wildflower growth. From the coppiced wood they created natural cages which would encourage wildlife to chew on them rather than the living trees.

The process for applying to primary, junior and middle schools in Hertfordshire opened on Monday 1 November. The easiest way to apply for a school place for September 2022 is to visit www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/admissions and complete the online application form.

Last year, 99 per cent of parents applied this way and found the system quick, easy and secure. Online applications can be amended at any time before the closing date and you can access your school offer before allocation letters are received and accept your school allocation online. The closing date for Under 11s applications is Saturday 15 January 2022 and it is vital that parents make their applications on time.

All the information you need about the Under 11s process is available at www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/admissions

Hertfordshire County Council Services for Young People is undertaking its second annual countywide survey in November and December to find out what young people think about some of the services available to them and the issues that affect them. The survey is for all young people aged 11-17 living or attending school / college in the county. An easy-to-read version for young people with learning difficulties and disabilities is available for those aged up to 25. The survey aims to capture the voices

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of young people across Hertfordshire, using their views to help ensure that we and our partners deliver valuable, inclusive, and relevant services and activities for them. The survey will be circulated to all secondary schools, education support centres and colleges and will be promoted across social media platforms. The survey opens on the 1 November and closes on 17 December. If you know a young person aged 11-17, or up to 25 if they have a special educational need, please encourage them to complete the survey through their school or youth group, by accessing the link through Services for Young People social media platforms, or by emailing sfyp@hertfordshire.gov.uk

Hertfordshire County Council's school counselling and mentoring programme, Safe Space, celebrates its 20-year anniversary this month. Counselling in schools was first introduced by the county council to provide high quality mental health support services to young people in 23 secondary schools in the county. The service grew and currently provides support in 250 primary and secondary schools.

Pupil counselling and mentoring services originally started as two separate pilot schemes in 2001 but merged into Safe Space in 2012. The mentoring side of the programme has steadily grown too and now there are 80 volunteer mentors who provide support across the whole of the county for young people aged 11-19 (25 if they have a learning disability or are a care-leaver).

UK Community Renewal Fund

All five Hertfordshire bids for Community Renewal Fund successful.

Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership have issued this joint statement.

This £3.26m funding will deliver a raft of measures to support people and communities most in need by piloting programmes and new approaches to drive innovation and productivity, champion local business and create employment opportunities within our key sectors.

Hertfordshire's successful bids are:

Building Back Better: Inclusive business support delivery for SME business support £612,993

Community Wealth Building Together £715,673

Driving creative innovation and culture-led regeneration through the film industry £844,795

Hertfordshire Opportunity Generator £524,233

STEM City £565,175

Hertfordshire County Council has set out an ambitious vision to improve bus services across the county. In response to the National Bus strategy, the county council has published its own Bus Service Improvement Plan.

The plan outlines the county council's vision and what needs to happen to achieve this and forms a key element of the authority's bid for a huge £84 million of additional funding.

A county-wide review and passenger survey conducted over the summer of 2021 identified a number of key areas for improvement, such as greater bus frequencies, simpler fares and ticketing, more real time information, and transport that gets you to places you need to go.

Further work will be conducted over the coming months to develop ideas in key areas, such as rail/bus integration, decarbonising the bus fleet and improving accessibility across the bus network.

The council has fully embraced the national bus agenda being the first local authority to introduce an Enhanced Partnership in 2020 and ensuring greater collaboration with local bus operators. In September 2021 it introduced HertsLynx, a demand responsive service in North and East Hertfordshire, following a successful bid to the Rural Mobility Fund that secured over £1 million in funding. Overnight, HertsLynx gave access to high quality public transport for residents in some villages who may not have had a regular bus service for several years.

Hertfordshire Young People's Awards 2021

More than 70 young people from across Hertfordshire were recognised for their outstanding achievements at the Hertfordshire County Council Services for Young People Awards, which took place in events across the county during National Youth Work Week (1 – 7 November).

This year, National Youth Work Week is celebrating the Champions of Youth Work – both the fantastic Youth Workers and the young people who inspire Youth Workers to do great work.

Young people who received awards were nominated by their Youth Workers and Personal Adviser for demonstrating determination, resilience, compassion, confidence and motivation.

Many have shown real persistence in working on their skills and knowledge in order to overcome

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their own personal barriers.

New Grange Paddocks now open

On 23rd October we formally attended the opening of the new Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre in Bishops Stortford along with Olympic Medalist and presenter Colin Jackson. The centre includes 25mtre pool, 20mtr training pool and confidence pool along with fitness suites and studios, spacious changing areas, and separate changing for outdoor sports, plus café. Next stages this month will be the demolition of the old centre. A planning application will be presented for a 3G pitch to go on the site. The upgrade of Hartham Leisure Centre in Hertford is ongoing.

Sustainable Hertfordshire Central Fund

The purpose of the Sustainable Hertfordshire fund is to provide support to the delivery of the Action Plan and the nine central ambitions of the Strategy. The central fund was confirmed as £10 million over a four-year period from April 2021 to deliver capital programmes. An additional £2 million was allocated for revenue expenditure to support in the delivery of the Sustainable Hertfordshire Strategy. Available from April 2021, this fund will be available for a two-year period or until it has been fully spent.

The project bids that have been approved are:

- 1) Net Zero Carbon Schools – MACE Consultancy - Commissioning of the consultancy to support the delivery of a feasibility study, establishing the strategic approach and implementation programme to deliver carbon neutral primary schools by 2030.
- 2) HCC Property Waste Audit - Conduct an audit on the provision of waste management services at approximately 200 County Council properties. The results of the audit will provide the opportunity to improve the environmental sustainability of the current waste operations.
- 3) Queen’s Green Canopy Funding to help Hertfordshire County Council lead, enable and inspire tree planting for the national Queens Green Canopy Project. This funding will deliver planting on HCC office sites, highways land and schools. Funding is also being allocated to deliver planting on other land – via District/Borough Councils, Town and Parish Councils, non HCC schools and community groups.
- 4) Air Quality Monitoring Software - Funding to procure mapping software services to help map, monitor and therefore predict the air quality across the county. This data will help target and inform specific campaigns.
- 5) Waste Disposal Authority Carbon Baseline - Commissioning of a consultancy service to develop the Carbon Baseline for the WDA and present options and opportunities for reducing the carbon emissions from this service.
- 6) Countywide Biodiversity Baseline Commissioning of a consultancy service to develop the baseline of the countywide biodiversity level and provide insights into how to increase this. This project is being delivered via the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership.
- 7) Highways Hedgerow Replacement - Funding to increase planting on Highways land and deliver hedgerow replacement over a three year period.
- 8) Hertfordshire Sustainable Periods - Co-Funded project with WasteAware, Herts Waste Partnership and Public Health to provide 180 Sustainable Period Ambassadors with training and sample packs for re-usable period products in schools across Hertfordshire.
- 9) Rural Estates Strategic Review - Funding to deliver the full review of the Rural Estates Improvement Plan aimed at identifying locations which can help with the successful delivery of the nine strategic ambitions.
- 10) COP26 - Funding to deliver a series of events across Hertfordshire to link in with the UN Climate Conference (COP26) event happening in Glasgow. Events will include an Eco Fair in November, a Youth COP in January 2022 and further engagement in Spring 2022.
- 11) Expansion of the Schools Energy project Funding to deliver low-cost, energy saving measures and LED lighting upgrades to all schools across Hertfordshire over the next two years.
- 12) Sustainable Hertfordshire Crowdfund Platform Funding to run a pilot project via the existing

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Crowdfund platform. This funding will be available to external groups and is aimed at getting local communities engaged in the successful delivery of the 'enable and inspire' strategic ambitions. Projects will be assessed as suitable by HCC staff and initial funds will need to be raised by the external group before HCC commits any financial support.

13) Climate Change Risk Assessment -

Funding to support the commissioning of consultancy services to provide an updated climate change risk assessment for the organisation.

14) HCC Carbon Baseline Review and Reduction Trajectory, HCC Carbon Budget Setting and Countywide Carbon Emissions reduction strategy -Funding to support the ongoing consultancy service to provide a

detailed trajectory for HCC to identify carbon reduction measures and set a carbon budget. Expansion of the HCC work to include countywide emissions, engagement with HCCSP, businesses and residents and to

identify reduction measures – including comms campaigns.

Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme Works Programme update

Hertfordshire County Council is progressing the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), (via Salix) funded works to decarbonise the schools and non-schools' estate. The £23.5 million in successful grant funding will be used to deliver works such as the installation of air source heat pumps and solar panels across 149 selected sites. As of the 21st of October, we have completed the following works programmes:

- 48 sites with installed solar panels
- 8 sites with cavity wall insulation
- 3 sites with full double glazing

All other works programmes are currently on track to be completed by the end of March 2022. This will deliver significant energy savings across the proposed sites, contributing to County Council's ambition of establishing a net zero carbon organisation by 2030.