

WALKING IN THE AIR IN

NORTH
HERTS



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Welcome to the winter edition of Outlook magazine.

This is the first time I have been able to write this column as Leader of North Herts Council due to the pre-election rules ahead of summer's general election. It is a huge privilege to serve the people of North Herts, and I am looking forward to meeting you and working with you to make North Herts a better place for all of us.

Lots has happened since the last edition of Outlook including the launch of our new Council Plan (see below); we've given over £200,000 to 20 community groups across the district to help them continue their amazing work (see the page opposite); and the start of the transformation of our leisure facilities (page 12) to name just a few.

As 2024 draws to a close, we are getting ready to celebrate the festive season in style across the district, which includes a visit from a very special snowman at North Herts Museum in Hitchin (see our back page for more details) and the chance to glide (or wobble!) on the ice rink at Letchworth Lido (see page 12). Turn to the back page of our magazine to find out all about the other fantastic festive events happening across the district.

Looking forward to 2025, the wintry weather brings its own complications, so if you need help with housing or looking after the more vulnerable members of your family, there is help available on pages 4, 5, 10 and 11. Pages 10 and 11 also include details of the huge variety of free Healthy Hub family and adults sessions running over the winter period.

Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a happy, healthy New Year.

Daniel Allen
Leader of the Council

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Have you seen our 2024 – 2028 Council Plan yet?

It's all about working **with you** for a fairer, greener North Herts. This handy one-pager includes some of the key headlines from our priorities:

<p>Thriving Communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on our Community Safety priorities: Anti-social behaviour, violence against women & girls and environmental crime (such as fly-tipping). Continue to allocate grant funding to local groups who provide vital services and activities which enable our communities to thrive. Work with our partners to deliver projects which reduce health inequalities. 	<p>Accessible Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement the Waste collection, Recycling and Street Cleansing contract in 2025 providing greater recycling opportunities. Improve your experience with us through better online services and a simpler customer experience. Work with Everyone Active to improve our leisure centres and make physical activity accessible to more people. 	<p>Responsible Growth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to implement our 2011-2031 Local Plan which will create much-needed homes for our district. Engage with you on the best option for regenerating the Churchgate shopping area of Hitchin. Work with the Herts Business Support and Skills programmes to increase activities available for North Herts businesses and residents. 	<p>Sustainability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a Sustainability Strategy setting out our approach to reducing carbon emissions, adapting to Climate Change and improving nature. Continue to work with partners to help North Herts become a net zero district. Continue to look for grants and income generation opportunities to support our priorities and help us return a balanced budget.
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For the full plan, just visit www.north-herts.gov.uk/councilplan

Our amazing communities

Money, money, money

Lots of money is being given to community groups across North Herts through various council grant schemes including the recent North Herts Prosperity Fund, which gave over £200,000 to 20 groups making a difference in the district. Sports clubs, gardening and allotment groups, social enterprises and community organisations have been given an all-important cash injection, including:

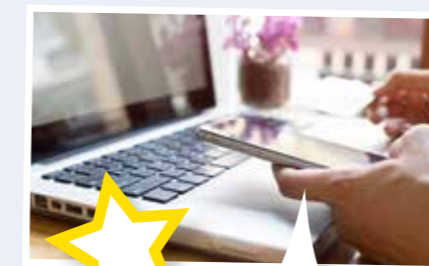
- Khalsa Youth Football Academy given £6,100** for costs of halls and drum displays for their futsal sessions and mini festivals.



- Herts Musical Memories given £5,000** for weekly singing sessions for older people with dementia.



- Triangle Community Garden in Hitchin given £20,000** towards making plots more accessible, providing a kitchen area and improving biodiversity.
- North Herts Centre for Voluntary Service (CVS) given £14,622** to upskill and help people get online.



- Creative Chefs given £3,524** to deliver their fun and educational cooking sessions for children in Royston and Baldock.



- Groundwork East given £1,982** for wild play sessions in Knebworth encouraging families to get outside to learn and improve both their physical and mental wellbeing.

Do you know a North Herts hero?

Is there someone special you know that has made a real difference in your local community? Perhaps an eco-warrior or exceptional young person? We want to hear from you by 5 January for the 2025 North Herts Heroes Awards.

Find out more: www.north-herts.gov.uk/heroes



Help this winter

Housing help this Winter

We have a small, dedicated team available to help local residents who may be struggling with their housing or facing homelessness.

Homelessness covers a wide range of situations and doesn't just mean that someone does not have a roof over their head (although this is the most visible form of homelessness). It could mean that you are sleeping in your car for example, or on a friend's sofa because you have nowhere else to go.

We firmly believe that prevention is the best cure. Our team provides free and confidential advice on a range of housing issues to anyone who needs it, to try and stop homelessness from happening in the first place. We can help with:

- **Threat of eviction.** The team can negotiate and/or mediate with landlords, family or friends on your behalf. We also fund free legal representation from Citizens Advice www.citizensadvice.org.uk/housing for those threatened with eviction and homelessness.
- **Housing options.** The team can advise on housing options suitable for your personal circumstances, including exploring benefit entitlement and debt concerns.

- **Financial support for rent arrears and deposits.** We also work with the Black Squirrel Credit Union www.bscu.org.uk to provide an affordable loan service for those facing homelessness.
- **Signposting and/or referrals for specialist assistance including mental health services.** We work closely with Survivors Against Domestic Abuse (SADA) www.friendsofsada.co.uk who provide specialist advice, support and emergency accommodation for those facing domestic abuse. Herts Young Homeless www.hyh.org.uk provide specialist support for young people, including mediation and crisis intervention.

Unfortunately, it is not always possible to prevent homelessness, and sometimes people wait until they reach crisis point before seeking help. In these instances, we will work with individuals to try and help them find alternative accommodation, although who we prioritise for assistance is tightly governed by law. Legally, we must provide emergency accommodation for families with dependent children and vulnerable individuals (for example those with serious health conditions).

We now have a dedicated officer responsible for sourcing private rental properties and matching clients to them, offering help with affordability checks, budget preparation and support and advice through the process of signing up to a tenancy. This has meant we have been able to support over 50 moves so far in 2024.

Winter is a particularly tough time for people sleeping on the streets. If you have concerns about anyone sleeping rough, please report them via Streetlink www.thestreetlink.org.uk, which will notify our outreach service so that the individual can be located and given appropriate assistance. In times of freezing weather, additional emergency accommodation and support is made available so that nobody needs to sleep out on the streets.

If you are worried that you may not have a bed for the night, or have any other concerns about your housing, please contact us through our online portal www.north-herts.gov.uk/housingportal, which is available 24/7, or call us on 01462 474000. More information is also available on the Housing Advice and Homelessness Support pages of our website: www.north-herts.gov.uk/housingsupport



Royston gets temporary banking hub

Before the last bank in Royston closed, local organisations worked together to set up a banking Hub which opened in September.

We worked with Royston Town Council and Cash Access UK, a not-for-profit organisation set up by nine major banks to protect nationwide access to cash, to ensure local people using all major banks

continued to have access to banking services including cash transactions like paying utility bills.

CLlr Tamsin Thomas, Executive Member for Enterprise & Arts, said: "We understand how important access to banking services is. By working together we're ensuring that local residents and businesses continue to have convenient access to essential financial services."

The temporary banking hub is in the annexe at the back of the Town Hall, Melbourn Street, and open five days a week until a permanent solution is found.



Are you over State Pension age?

Did you know, if you are a state pensioner over 66 years of age and on a low income, you could qualify for Pension Credit? This will boost your income and allow you to claim the Winter Fuel Payment.

You could also receive help with your Council Tax and rent through Housing Benefit if you rent your home. Pension Credit can be backdated 3 months if your circumstances were the same for the whole of that time.

Check if you're eligible for Pension Credit at: www.gov.uk/pension-credit and go to www.north-herts.gov.uk/pensioncredit to find more details of the other possible benefits available.



Are you ready for winter?

From staying well in cold weather to taking care of your family, neighbours and home, the Met Office offers lots of advice on staying safe this winter:

- Check your heating and water pipes, and know where your stop tap is
- Check on vulnerable neighbours
- If you are a customer in vulnerable circumstances, you can sign up to the Priority Services Register for utility companies at www.thepsr.co.uk. Don't forget to also call 105 free of charge in the event of a power cut.
- Before strong winds, secure or store garden furniture, parasols and trampolines
- Have a 'grab bag' of essentials and basic supplies to hand just in case you have to leave home quickly.

More information: www.metoffice.gov.uk/weatherready

Plan ahead for flooding

The unexpected flooding of properties in the Woolgrove Road and Green Lane areas of Hitchin when the River Purwell burst its banks earlier this year, is a reminder to us all to be ready for potential flooding.

Check your flood risk today and sign up to receive flood warnings by visiting: www.gov.uk/prepare-for-flooding. We also issue regular severe weather updates on our website: www.north-herts.gov.uk/severe-weather and across our social media pages.



What your local councillor does

In our last residents survey, only 30% of respondents said they were aware of what their local councillor does. Here's a handy guide on what our councillors do to support you, with links to further information should you like to know more.

The most visible part of being a councillor involves dealing with your concerns and queries which is known as casework. There are several opportunities to raise any concerns you may have with your councillor including in-person at monthly surgeries and quarterly forums:



At local events such as Eco Fairs and in-person consultations, like the recent Churchgate Hub:



Councillors also visit their Wards with our Leader and Managing Director so that they can see first-hand the issues affecting local areas.



You can also contact your local councillor directly. Just visit www.north-herts.gov.uk/your-councillors for their details.

A large part of being a councillor is representing you at meetings, making decisions on your behalf and then communicating these with you. We have several committees which councillors are appointed to depending on what percentage of the council their political party represents. Our key committees are:

- Full Council
- Cabinet
- Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- Finance, Audit and Risk Committee
- Standards Committee
- Planning Control Committee

Councillors are involved in the development of new policies/strategies and ensure they bring the views and priorities of their communities to the debate, therefore ensuring that decisions made by the Council are reflective of your views.



We stream all our meetings live on our YouTube page so that you can watch proceedings and see the contributions from your local councillor. All meeting dates, documents from the meetings and a link to the YouTube stream can be found at www.north-herts.gov.uk/meetings.

Why not join us on YouTube for our next meeting and see what we do?



of acceptable forms of photo ID (which now includes the HM Armed Forces Veteran card) plus how to apply for a free voter ID document known as a Voter Authority Certificate.



2025 County Council Elections

The elections for County Councillors will be held on **1 May 2025 with polling stations open from 7am until 10pm.**

To be able to vote you need to be on the Electoral Register. If you are not already registered it is quick and

easy to do so at www.gov.uk/register-to-vote. It only takes a few minutes and you will need your National Insurance number.

Don't forget to bring photo ID to the polling station. Visit www.north-herts.gov.uk/voter-id to see the list

Visit www.north-herts.gov.uk/surgeries for future surgery dates and www.north-herts.gov.uk/community-forums for future area forum dates.



We're White Ribbon Accredited and taking action to prevent violence against women and girls



We're proud to have achieved White Ribbon Accreditation, reinforcing our commitment to prevent violence against women and girls. This status highlights our dedication to raising awareness, encouraging community involvement, and ensuring the safety and well-being of women and girls throughout the district.

We've established a steering group and are implementing an action plan designed to foster cultural change. This includes training staff to better understand and respond to violence against women and girls, supporting local initiatives, and leading by example in promoting safe spaces.

We're collaborating with partners including Survivors Against Domestic Abuse (SADA), the police, schools, and community groups to expand the initiative's reach.

On 25 November, we held a fundraiser for staff in support of the White Ribbon charity and SADA, helping to raise funds and awareness to help prevent violence against women and girls.

Cllr Val Bryant, North Herts Council's Executive Member for Community Engagement said: "As a council we have a duty to create safe spaces and build a culture of respect both within our teams and across the



community. We're committed to working with White Ribbon UK to ensure our actions make a lasting impact."

Residents are encouraged to get involved by pledging never to commit, excuse, or remain silent about violence against women. Visit www.whiteribbon.org.uk to learn more and take the pledge.

Stay safe and informed: Use the Council's Public Licence Register

Did you know that the council's Public Licence Register is a valuable resource for checking and verifying local licences? Whether you're planning an event, booking a taxi, visiting a licensed business, or searching for applications currently under public consultation, the register provides transparency and peace of mind.

What is the Public Licence Register?

The Public Licence Register is an online database where you can look up licences issued by North Herts Council. This includes licences for taxis, pubs, restaurants, event spaces, and other businesses that require official authorisation to operate.

Why use it:

Checking the register ensures that:

- You are using licensed and regulated services
- Businesses are operating within the law
- Events or venues meet safety and regulatory standards

Whether you're hiring a cab, attending a local event, or planning a celebration, taking a moment to confirm a business's licence status can help protect you and support safe practices.

How to access it

Accessing the Public Licence Register is easy and free. Simply visit the North Herts Council website, navigate to the licensing section, and search by business type or name. Visit: www.north-herts.gov.uk/publicregister

Supporting safe nights out

On 1 December we launched a new Night-Time Economy Charter, in partnership with Hitchin Pub Watch, to help make the district safer for women and girls. Training, video resources, and self-assessment tools are being provided to participating businesses. The scheme will be extended to other towns across the district in the coming months.

North Herts District investments

Changes to car parks

Car park payments

Next year we'll be upgrading our car park payment machines with new touchscreen kiosks offering a wider range of payment options as well as our new 'check in and check out' feature (using credit/debit cards and Google/Apple Pay) meaning you don't have to guess how long you'll be and you'll just pay for what you use. The PayByPhone option will continue to be available using our existing app and all car parks will still accept cash.

Please note we do not use QR codes as a payment option given the recent scams.

EV chargers

Next year we'll be working with Blink Charging UK to replace existing EV chargepoints and in some cases install additional sockets. The new EV chargepoints will be installed in the following long stay car parks:

- Garden Square & Hillshott in Letchworth

- Bancroft, The Lairage & Woodside in Hitchin
- The Twitchell in Baldock
- The Warren & Civic Centre in Royston

The new chargepoints will be easy to use, with instructions onsite and online, and customer support, and you can pay using contactless or via the Blink app. You can charge for up to four hours during the day or for longer periods overnight.



Royston skatepark revamped

Calling all 'kooks' (beginner) and 'rippers' (skilled), Royston skatepark at Newmarket Road Recreation Ground reopened this summer to much delight from the local skating community.

The council, with the help of landscape architects at Groundwork East and local users, has transformed the skatepark – it's been extended on two sides, more than doubling the existing footprint, and the new street area includes hubba ledges and a grind rail, flowing into an open bowl/halfpipe suitable for all abilities, with an extended quarter-pipe for the more experienced riders!

Local user, Brooker Lawman, said: "It's excellent having the extension, it really breathes new life into the place. I've spent years skating! Too many skateparks are being knocked down or left without maintenance these days, it's sad to see because there really is nothing quite like companionship of the skateboarding community."

Rhyia Clark added: "It's awesome to see so many different and new people at the skatepark. The renovations haven't just created a better place for us to skate, but it's created new friendships and a more positive atmosphere in the area. It's especially nice to see more girls/women coming along too!"

The upgrade cost £100k and was funded through contributions from a local housing developer (known as a section 106 agreement).

Hitchin skatepark update

The renovation of the skatepark at King George Recreation Ground has unfortunately been delayed but we are still committed to delivering a top-notch facility! Keep an eye out for opportunities to have your say on our website and social media channels (see page 2).



Green belt expanded through Local Plan

Did you know we've actually increased the amount of green belt in North Herts by 3,350 hectares, the equivalent of around 5,000 football pitches!



As part of our Local Plan, we were able to designate a channel of land between two existing areas of green belt in the area known as Southern Rural. The 'new' green belt largely includes Great Offley, Ley Green, Preston, St Paul's Warden, Whitwell and Kimpton.

We are very much in the minority of local councils who have done this, and although we have needed to release some areas of green belt in other areas to meet the need for

housing and other development, overall North Herts is greener as a result of our Local Plan. In fact, North Herts is nearly 50% green belt! With an increasing population and desperate need for homes, there will always be a balance to strike between providing suitable sites and preserving the natural environment.

What is the Local Plan?

The North Herts Local Plan 2011-31 was adopted by the council two years ago, in November 2022. The government requires every planning authority to have one, to guide decisions on future development and address the needs and opportunities of an area – such as green space, housing, employment and shops.

What is the latest update?

We are in the process of updating the Local Plan. This will take some time as we need to take into consideration lots of new government planning legislation and guidance.

How can I get involved?

Keep an eye on our website, social media and other communication channels – be in the know by signing up to our weekly enews – www.north-herts.gov.uk/subscribe. You can always view and comment on planning applications, from minor developments to strategic masterplans, and you can actually keep track of planning applications in a specified area of North Herts using our online map and get a notification when new applications are submitted.

Did you see the Leader of the Council on BBC news?

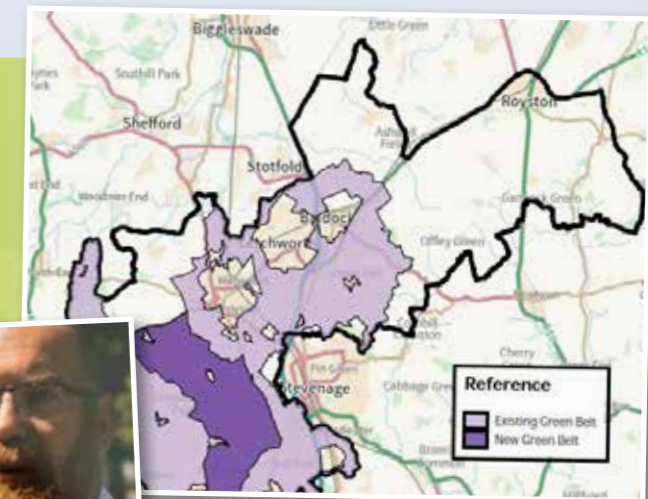
Councillor Daniel Allen, Leader of North Herts Council, appeared on BBC Look East twice in the last few months, to talk about the district's house building targets and how we've expanded our green belt.

More information:

www.north-herts.gov.uk/PlanningApps

www.lechworth.com/For-the-community/Proposals-for-ig1-land-north-of-lechworth

www.growingbaldock.co.uk



Councillor Daniel Allen
Labour, North Herts
LOOK EAST



Free

Royston

Heritage Hall, Royston Town Hall, Melbourn Street, Royston SG8 7DA

4 December Creative Chefs Fun with food for under 5s 9.30am

18 December Adult craft – Seasonal Crafting with the Art in Martins 10am

23 December Christmas Creative Chefs for children aged 10 and under 11am-12pm

15 January Creative Chefs Fun with food for under 5s 9.30am

22 January Adult craft – Scrapbooking with the Art in Martins 10am

12 February Creative Chefs Fun with food for under 5s 9.30am

19 February Adult craft – Felting with the Art in Martins 10am

12 March Creative Chefs Fun with Food for under 5s 9.30am

19 March Adult craft – Mixed media with the Art in Martins 10am

Baldock

Community Centre, Simpson Drive, Baldock SG7 6DH

3 December Adult craft – Seasonal crafting with the Art in Martins 10am

12 December Creative Chefs Fun with food for under 5s 9.30am

14 December Christmas Creative Chefs for children aged 10 and under 11am-12pm

23 December Christmas Creative Chefs for children aged 10 and under 11am-12pm

7 January Adult craft – Felting with the Art in Martins 10am

16 January Creative Chefs Fun with food for under 5s 9.30am

4 February Adult craft – Mixed Media with the Art in Martin 10am

13 February Creative Chefs Fun with food for under 5s 9.30am

4 March Adult craft – Scrapbooking with the Art in Martins 10am

13 March Creative Chefs Fun with food for under 5s 9.30am

Knebworth

St Martin's Parish Centre, St Martin's Road, Knebworth SG3 6ER

28 November Adult craft – Slow stitch with the Art in Martins 10am

5 December Creative Chefs Fun with food for under 5s 9.30am

9 January Creative Chefs Fun with food for under 5s 9.30am

14 December Christmas Creative Chefs for children aged 10 and under 3 - 4pm

19 December Adult craft – Seasonal crafting with the Art in Martins 10am

23 January Adult craft – Mixed media with the Art in Martins 10am

6 February Creative Chefs Fun with food for under 5s 9.30am

27 February Adult craft – Scrapbooking with the Art in Martins 10am

6 March Creative Chefs Fun with food for under 5s 9.30am

27 March Adult craft – Felting with the Art in Martins 10am

Hitchin

Christchurch, Bedford Road, Hitchin SG5 1HF

6 December Creative Chefs Fun with food for under 5s 9.30am

10 January Creative Chefs Fun with food for under 5s 9.30am

7 February Creative Chefs Fun with food for under 5s 9.30am

7 March Creative Chefs Fun with food for under 5s 9.30am

Letchworth

Fortescue Hall, St Hugh's Church, Pixmore Way, Letchworth SG6 3TP

23 December Christmas Creative Chefs for children aged 10 and under 3 - 4pm



Air frying and Slow cooking courses 10am - 1pm

If you are interested in knowing more about slow cooking or air frying sign up to one of these free courses running across the district.

All attendees will receive a free air fryer or slow cooker

11 December Air frying course Heritage Hall, Royston

14 January Air frying course Pirton Village Hall

23 January Slow cooking course Mrs Howard Memorial Hall, Letchworth

5 February Slow cooking course Codicote Peace Memorial Hall

11 February Air frying course Baldock Community Centre

13 February Slow Cooking St Martin's Parish Centre, Knebworth

27 February Air frying course St Mary's Parish Church Room, Ashwell

13 March Air frying course Christchurch, Hitchin

Book your place:

Call 01727 649960 or email training@communities1st.org.uk

Low impact exercise for older adults

Every Friday John Coxall Court, Letchworth 2 - 3pm

Every Monday - St Thomas Canterbury Church Hall, Royston 1.30 - 2.30pm

Every Monday St Martin's Parish Centre, Knebworth 2.15 - 3.15pm

Every Thursday Baldock Community Centre 2 - 3pm

Classes £2 per person, just turn up and pay



Numbers are limited so must be pre-booked via www.ticketsource.co.uk/north-herts-district-council



For more info email healthyhub@north-herts.gov.uk or call 01462 474111

Herts Careline is the Council's community alarm and telecare service, run in partnership with Herts County Council. The service looks after approximately 16,000 older and vulnerable people across Hertfordshire and surrounding areas. It gives them and their families peace of mind that they can live more independently in their own homes for longer, with 24/7 emergency help on hand if they need it, at just a press of a button.

Visit www.care-line.co.uk or call 0300 999 2 999 for more information.



All OK Reassurance Service

A daily telephone check-in service to make sure you're OK each day, to bring peace of mind to you and your family.

0300 999 2 999 www.care-line.co.uk/allok



Customer Satisfaction Survey Results 2024



99% would recommend Herts Careline to a friend or relative

98% feel more reassured having the assistive technology service

95% feel more independent having their assistive technology service

95% say the installation process was 'easy' or 'about right'

94% feel confident using their equipment

92% say the advice they receive from the call operators is 'excellent' or 'good'

91% said they were 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with the Herts Careline service.

90% say it gives friends / family peace of mind knowing they have the Herts Careline service

Data from 344 respondents, 2024

Upgrades underway at Leisure Centres across North Herts

Exciting changes are underway for leisure facilities across North Herts, as the district embarks on a major £1.1 million refurbishment project. North Herts Leisure Centre, Royston Leisure Centre, and Hitchin Swimming and Fitness Centre, managed by Everyone Active, the council's new leisure operator, are all undergoing significant upgrades and renovations.

The £750,000 refurbishment of the gym at North Herts Leisure Centre celebrated its grand opening in September. This state-of-the-art fitness space now boasts the latest Life Fitness cardio equipment, advanced resistance machines and an expanded free weights area - the latter comprising 58 per cent of the gym's equipment, a 19 percent increase to cater to growing demand for strength training.

Meanwhile, at Royston Leisure Centre, the focus has been on enhancing the group exercise experience. The cycling studio has been doubled in size and fitted out with brand new Keiser bikes and immersive audiovisual technology, creating an unparalleled spin class experience. The gym's changing rooms have also received a refresh.

Hitchin Swimming and Fitness Centre has ambitious plans too. By Christmas, the gym will unveil a £400,000 upgrade - six months ahead of schedule. This will introduce new strength and cardio equipment, along with inspiring decor, lighting and flooring.

Hitchin Swimming and Fitness Centre has also debuted Everyone Active's first ever Reformer Pilates studio, a £100,000 facility with specialised machines that have adjustable resistance and moving platforms that roll up and down as the participant performs the move. Further upgrades which have taken place at Hitchin include a £200,000 refurbishment of two studios and a brand-new spin studio.



These transformative projects demonstrate a firm commitment to upgrading North Herts' fitness facilities. The future of leisure in North Herts is looking brighter - and more fit - than ever.

Spotlight on Badminton

Calling all badminton enthusiasts! Whether you're new to the game or a seasoned player, there are lots of options to play in North Herts for adults and children.

For those looking for a casual game, Everyone Active's Active Communities programme hosts two drop-in sessions. Just turn up and pay on the day - no strings attached!

Head to North Herts Leisure Centre in Letchworth on Wednesdays from 10.35am to 12.15pm, or to Royston Leisure Centre on Tuesdays from 11am to 12pm, and enjoy a friendly match with other locals. Contact North Herts Leisure Centre 01462 679311 and Royston Leisure Centre on 01763 255190 for more information.

A new session for older adults has also launched at Baldock Community Centre and runs Fridays 1.30-3pm. Call Bob Green on 07952 932662 for more information.

If you're interested in a more competitive experience, affiliated Badminton England clubs across North Herts offer a range of options. These clubs welcome new members

and provide access to experienced coaches to help you improve your game. Clubs like SMASHIT Sports Ltd., Norton Baldock, and Cam Gears offer various weekly sessions, ensuring that there's something for everyone's schedule.

For juniors, clubs like Baldock Junior and Couzens provide dedicated sessions at locations such as Knights Templar Sports Centre and Hitchin Boys School, fostering skills and sportsmanship in a supportive environment.

Whether it's a drop-in game or club membership, North Herts has plenty to offer badminton lovers of all ages. To find clubs or activities near you, check out Badminton England's activity finder online. Get ready to smash your way into the game!

Information on local badminton clubs and sessions can be found at www.badmintonengland.co.uk. Use the club finder or session finder.

Glide into a wonderland this winter...

Whether you are a seasoned pro or taking to the ice for your first time, there is a place for everyone!

www.everyoneactive.com

EVERYONE SKATE Letchworth



Book your skate today



Celebrating Volunteers: Strengthening community through North Herts Sports Clubs

Sports clubs bring people together, creating a shared passion for sport across North Herts. For many, weekends at the club are a highlight, filled with excitement on the field and behind the scenes. Beyond match days, dedicated volunteers make it all possible, from painting changing rooms in the off-season to coordinating events and ensuring member safety.

Volunteers are the backbone of local sports clubs, offering invaluable support as kit managers, fixture coordinators, and welfare officers. Their hard work and commitment foster an inclusive, positive atmosphere for everyone involved, from players to spectators. More than just a helping hand, volunteering at sports clubs gives people a strong sense of belonging and the chance to develop skills that benefit both the club and the wider community.

Recognising these efforts, North Herts Council has launched the North Herts Volunteering Project. In partnership with Active in the Community, North Herts CVS, and Herts Sports and Physical Activity Partnership, this new initiative is designed to support and celebrate our local sports club volunteers. The project will gather feedback from volunteers to understand their needs, helping us provide tailored resources, toolkits, and funding opportunities.

To get involved, scan the QR code to share your thoughts. You could also win one of five £100 equipment vouchers for your club! Alternatively, contact adam.nnochiri@aitc.org.uk or call 07399 004743.



Waste & Recycling

Tips to reduce single-use plastic this Christmas

While some plastics may feel unavoidable during the festive season, now could be the perfect time to say goodbye to cling film!

Preserving food to avoid waste is essential, but why not try using storage containers like ice cream tubs, takeaway boxes, reusable beeswax wraps, or even foil (which is recyclable if clean)?

When hosting, it's tempting to grab disposable plates, cutlery, and tablecloths. Instead, consider reusable alternatives to reduce waste.



Christmas Bin Collections

Your bin collection days will be different over the Christmas and New Year period. Keep an eye out for your bin hanger with the revised collection dates, or check our website for details: www.north-herts.gov.uk/christmas-bins-and-recycling

If you're signed up for garden waste collections, you can leave your real Christmas tree out for collection when services resume in the new year. Please note that large trees won't easily fit in our vehicles and should be cut up to make them smaller. Or consider using a Christmas tree collection scheme like the one offered by Garden House Hospice. (see pg 15 for more information).

Just a reminder: there will be no garden waste collections from 30 December 2024 to 11 January 2025. This pause allows our crews to focus on collecting the extra recycling waste that builds up during the festive season.



Feed your food waste caddy

Don't forget to make use of your food caddy this Christmas.

Unavoidable scraps like peelings, bones, and banana skins are perfect for weekly food waste collections. By composting these items, we're able to capture the nutrients and turn them into nutrient-rich fertiliser for local agriculture.

Some food waste can be avoided during Christmas. Take the humble Brussels sprout—love them or hate them, they often get left on the plate. Calculating portion sizes for your guests can help reduce waste and save money. There are plenty of online tools to help you estimate how much food to buy for your Christmas lunch. We particularly like the BBC Good Food Christmas portion planner.

Waste Aware's Worth Saving campaign has lots of tips to help you make the most of your festive meals.

Wasting food can also be expensive so remember 4 steps to save; plan, store, shop and eat! Visit www.wasteaware.org.uk/worthsaving to help you get the most from your festive food!

How do you host a stellar party? You Planet!

Kick start your party with this smoked salmon Christmas starter: <https://bit.ly/4fKx2yg>



Be a bright spark

If your twinkly lights won't turn on, your batteries are dead or your phone has been upgraded by Santa, then you will need to know what to do with your electrical waste.

Any item with a battery or a plug is classed as an electrical item and should not be disposed of in your general waste bin. These items, if not disposed of correctly, can cause fires so it's very important to take them to a place where they can be re-used or recycled.

The following tips should help you manage your waste:

- Could your item be donated or sold (of course, this only applies to working items)?
- If your item has broken, could it be repaired? Elements in cookers for example can be replaced,

which might be handy to know if it breaks with a turkey in it. You can often find replacement parts online too. You might find it cheaper to repair than replace.

- You might find it cheaper to repair than replace. Why not see if there is a local repair café too: www.visithitchin.com/event/hitchin-repair-cafe/
- If you are re-buying an item because your current one is broken beyond repair, you may find your retailer has a takeback scheme in store (B&Q and Curry's advise they offer this).
- Batteries can be taken to several retailers for recycling, you often find a container or box at the front of store.

Winter bin tips

A reminder that as the temperature drops this time of year, the contents of your bins can become frozen. Crews will attempt to empty frozen bins, but the contents can become stuck.

To avoid your bin not being emptied, please:

- Check the lid of your bin will open before collection is due
- Garden waste is particularly susceptible to becoming stuck.
- Loosen the waste by sliding a spade between the contents and the side of the bin
- If possible, store your bin in a slightly warmer place, against a wall or inside a garage or shed for example.

Crews will leave a notice if your bin has not been emptied as a result of being frozen.

<https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/christmas-bins-and-recycling>

Christmas treecycling

Book your collection by 1st January

4th – 9th JAN

Collections from anyone who lives within SG1 – SG9, SG15 – SG18 and AL6.

Donate Collect Recycle

Scan me

Register online

www.ghospicecare.org.uk/trees
01462 679540

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Celebrating our staff

Museum musings

With five years under our belt for North Herts Museum in Hitchin, we take a look at what's been happening and what's coming up!

The last five years...

With 50 exhibitions and nearly 125,000 visitors through the doors since it opened in 2019, it's been a jam (or marmalade!) packed five years – with Paddington, and The BFG, being our most popular exhibitions with over 9,000 visitors.

We were really excited about being able to display original Rembrandt etchings in 2020, as generally people don't have the opportunity to see works of such world quality at their local museum, and the feedback showed how thrilled visitors were to see these prints as well.

We went behind the scenes to ask Ros Allwood, Cultural Services Manager, what her most memorable moment was...

"This has to be an alarm callout in the middle of the night on the first day of the Rembrandt exhibition, where the sensors indicated that someone was in the museum,

not just a fly or spider. There had been a couple of recent thefts of Rembrandt paintings from other museums, and I remember driving through the empty streets to Hitchin wondering how I was going to tell the lender that their priceless prints had been stolen. Thankfully, when I got to the museum, the alarm had been triggered by a helium balloon from an earlier party in the Town Hall, which was dancing around at head height – I've rarely been so relieved!"

What's coming up...

Don't miss the story behind The Snowman™ until 12 January (see back page). We're due Horrible Histories in the summer, 'I grew up in the 80s' next winter, and a return of the popular Blood & Bone in summer 2026. We're also planning an exhibition about the early Letchworth firm St Edmundsbury Weavers for 2026, with beautiful Arts & Crafts textiles.



£75,000 for collection research

We'll be finding out more about the items in our museum collection from around the world thanks to a grant from the prestigious Museums Association and Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund.

The two-year project will help us delve deeper into the fascinating colonial and other world objects we hold, and fund a new cutting-edge display for the newly researched items.

If you would like to get involved or have information or interesting objects, please fill in the form on the museum website at www.northhertsmuseum.org/contact-us or call 01462 474554.

Staff raise nearly £9,000 for Cancer Research



17 members of staff tackled the Yorkshire Three Peaks in September as part of the Public Sector Challenge.

Everyone Active, our leisure contractor, kindly sponsored the entry fees for the team and staff paid for their own travel and accommodation.



Some of the team at the top of Whenside

Start a career that makes a real change

Our council is full of people who chose a career in local government to make a difference to our community.

Whether you're just starting out or looking for a career change, why not embrace the opportunities that we have whilst enjoying flexible working and an improved work-life balance?

Make a difference to North Herts, visit:

www.north-herts.gov.uk/jobs



Make a difference

Work for your local council

This campaign is funded by UK Government





Thank you to everyone who has taken the time to give us their feedback since the last edition of Outlook magazine. Your thoughts are invaluable in helping us inform our future decision-making.

Here's what you've told us since the summer regarding the future development of the Churchgate shopping area of Hitchin and potential improvements to the Grange Rec in Letchworth.

Taking part in the Churchgate conversation

Thank you to everyone who took part in this unique and exciting opportunity to shape the regeneration of the Churchgate shopping area of Hitchin. Our aim is to create a vibrant and thriving part of town that reflects the needs and desires of our communities.

town centre. We are now busy collating and analysing the data and comments you provided us with, which will help us with the next step in our process. These results enable us to create a vision for the project that will be the foundation of any scheme that is proposed and delivered. This way, the community play a big part in shaping the future of the site and being part of the journey alongside the Council.

Here are just a few highlights of what you told us. You can view the full feedback at www.north-herts.gov.uk/churchgate.

Respondents strongly agreed that Hitchin's character and heritage are key assets that should be reflected in the regeneration.

Revamping the market (including more variety of stalls and more local produce) and opening-up the River Hiz are seen as the most important things to be delivered in the regeneration.

The introduction of seating, green spaces and play areas is seen as very important to you.

You'd also like to see the introduction of live music, community events, and seasonal celebrations in communal areas.

If you'd like to continue being part of the Churchgate conversation as we move forwards with the regeneration, please sign up to our online community hub at www.north-herts.gov.uk/churchgate.



Within our research gathering and early visioning phase for the Grange Recreation Ground, over 300 people kindly took the time to give us their thoughts on how they use the park and the potential changes they would like to see to improve the

grounds for everyday recreation. Here's what you told us:

- 86% of respondents were Letchworth residents, with 83% visiting the Grange Rec at least once a month/majority every week.
- Most visitors walk to the Grange Rec (54%), followed by driving and cycling.
- Your favourite facilities are the Greenway pathways for walking/cycling, the field for dog walking and using the children's play equipment with your families.

- You'd like to see more picnic tables/seating, a greater choice of children's play equipment, lighting so you can walk the dog at night and some kind of shelter from the elements.

Thank you so much to everyone who responded, your feedback is going to help our Planning and Estates teams start drafting a future vision for The Grange Rec and we will be back in touch with our plans soon. Keep an eye on our social media pages for updates.



We are currently undertaking a Community Governance Review to consider parish ward boundaries, parish election dates and councillor representation throughout the North Hertfordshire area. This is to make sure that, at parish level, governance arrangements are working as efficiently and effectively as they should be.

Thank you to everyone who gave their views in the first stage of our consultation which closed on the 7 October. Keep an eye on www.north-herts.gov.uk/community-governance-review and our social media channels for when the second stage of the consultation goes live as it will be asking for views on the recommendations formulated from stage one.

How to have your say

Join our Citizens Panel

We'd love to meet more of you in-person and get your feedback first-hand so we're actively looking for new residents to join our Citizens Panel.

You need to be 18-years of age upwards and can live anywhere in North Herts. We're looking for people who want to play an active part in informing our future decision-making and would particularly like to hear from our younger residents.

Just email comms@north-herts.gov.uk and we'll get in touch.



Join our community hubs

We're keen to hear your views throughout the year, not just when we're running a survey or consultation and our online community hubs are the perfect place for us to share future ideas and updates with you for your feedback and thoughts. We have three community hubs:

Our Budget hub - be part of our future budget conversations and help us understand your priorities.

Our Churchgate Conversations hub - help us shape the vision of the Churchgate shopping area of Hitchin by joining the conversation.

Our Climate Hive - a hive of ideas and activities to help us reach our climate targets for North Herts.

You can find them all at: www.north-herts.gov.uk/consultations

CONTACTING NORTH HERTS COUNCIL

Most North Herts Council 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

OTHER WAYS TO CONTACT US:

Phone: 01462 474000

www.facebook.com/northhertsDC
 @NorthHertsDC @northhertsdc
north-hertfordshire-district-council

North Herts Council 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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WHAT'S ON

Festive Edition

EVENTS & EXHIBITIONS

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE MUSEUM

Find out more about museum events and book tickets at: www.buytickets.at/northhertsmuseumandhitchintownhall

The Snowman™ **Running until 12 January 2025**

The museum is thrilled to present some of the original hand-drawn cels and celluloid sheets used in the TV adaptation of Raymond Briggs' story of The Snowman™, as well as a facsimile of the original manuscript, and a selection of the early books. There is dressing-up for the little ones, a reading corner, and other activities for children.

© Snowman Enterprises Limited 2024

The Snowman™ Quiet Opening **Monday 23rd December, 9-10am**

We're offering a quiet opening time for The Snowman™ exhibition. If you're neurodiverse and need a quieter time to come and enjoy our special wintery exhibition book your free place (see above) and come along.

Kids Christmas Craft Activities **Thursday 19 December, Saturday 21 December and Thursday 2 January, multiple times available.**

Over the festive period get in the spirit of things with some crafting fun! Make Christmas gift sets, baubles and collages.



HITCHIN TOWN HALL

Find out more about Town Hall events and book tickets at www.buytickets.at/northhertsmuseumandhitchintownhall

Kids Christmas Disco **Sunday 22 December, 12-2PM**

Put on your Santa hats: our annual snowtastic Christmas Disco is coming back for another year! Make sure to prepare your dancing feet because we'll be providing an afternoon full of merry music and games.

Sign up at www.north-herts.gov.uk/subscribe to be the first to hear about 2025 events in North Herts.

HITCHIN

The Hitchin Christmas Tree Festival, Holy Saviour Church **Friday 13 – Sunday 15 December, 10am opening**

Admission £5 (accompanied children free) with refreshments available.

Visit: www.holysaviourhitchin.org.uk/christmas-tree-festival

Hitchin's BIG Weekend **Saturday 14 & Sunday 15 December**

Hitchin's Market Place will be transformed with a giant snow globe, Santa's Grotto, rodeo reindeer, make & take workshop, and much, much more!

LETCHWORTH

Meet & Greet with Santa, Garden Square Shopping Centre **Saturday 7, Sunday 8, Saturday 14 & Sunday 15 December 10am-2pm**

Meet Santa & Mrs Claus this December for free.



Farmers on Lights Tour **Saturday 21 December, 6.45pm**

Watch the tractor light parade in Letchworth Town Centre in aid of Garden House Hospice. There will be food & drink available too. Letchworth is the place to watch!

Standalone Christmas Market **Saturday 7 and Sunday 8 December, 10am -4pm**

Join us at Standalone this Christmas for a fun-filled Festive Market complete with music, food, and shopping. Our animals will even make an appearance! Pre book your tickets online at www.standalonelfarm.digitickets.co.uk/tickets

BALDOCK

Christmas Fayre

Baldock's favourite event of the year is back again! With a warm-up party on Friday 6 December and the Christmas Fayre itself on Saturday 7 December. Just visit www.baldockeventsforum.org.uk for all the details.

ROYSTON

Royston Cave **Saturday 7 and Sunday 8 December, Tour times: 11am, 11.50am, 12.40pm & 1.30pm**

Visit the cave at this magical time of year, with subtle Christmas decorations and flickering light. For tickets, visit: www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/christmas-in-the-cave-2024-tickets

Carols with Royston Town Band **Sunday 15 December, 2-4pm, Royston Parish Church** **Tuesday 17 December and Tuesday 24 December, 6:30-8pm, Tesco**

