
Connecting Three Rivers (formerly Local Strategic Partnership and Community Safety Board) MINUTES

**Of a meeting held in the Penn Chamber, Three Rivers House, Rickmansworth, on
Wednesday, 18 June 2025 from 10.25 am - 12.00 pm.**

Present: Councillors

Sarah Nelmes (Chair)
Steve Drury

TRDC Officers in attendance:

Joanne Wagstaffe, Chief Executive
Kimberley Grout, Associate Director – Corporate, Customer & Community
Rebecca Young, Head of Strategy & Partnerships
Shivani Davé, Partnerships & Inclusion Manager
Jemma Duffell, Community Safety Officer & Deputy Prevent Lead
Michelle Wright, Community Safety & Safeguarding Manager, Prevent Lead
Anita Hibbs, Committee Officer

10 WELCOME

i. Changes to membership, introduction and apologies

Attendees were welcomed to the meeting and introduced themselves.

ii. Minutes and actions from the previous meeting

The Partnerships & Inclusion Manager confirmed that actions from the previous meeting had been completed and thanked everyone involved.

The minutes of the Connecting Three Rivers meeting, held on 19 March 2025 were confirmed as a correct record.

11 LOCAL GOVERNMENT RE-ORGANISATION

The Chief Executive provided a detailed briefing on the current status and future plans regarding devolution and local government reorganisation in Hertfordshire.

The following questions were asked and responses provided regarding the briefing:

1. Consultation process and impact on police

While details about police reorganisation remain unclear, the government has started a formal consultation with local stakeholders, and communities expected to provide input. The example of Surrey, which has already initiated its consultation, was mentioned. It was emphasised that

despite consultation, the establishment of mayoral units must go ahead with no option for local authorities to remain as they are currently. Collaboration among districts, boroughs, counties and key officials is ongoing, to manage this transition.

The Police Crime Commissioner provided a response in relation to the impact on police, explaining that currently, policing is organised around 10 district boundaries, which have effectively served the community. However, there is an expectation that these boundaries will realign to match local authority partnerships, although no immediate changes are planned. The government's White Paper emphasises aligning mayoral authority boundaries with police and fire and rescue boundaries, granting mayors combined responsibilities in areas where these boundaries coincide. While Hertfordshire is not currently affected by boundary misalignments, the expectation is that such alignment will become standard practice. There are significant challenges ahead as nearly all local government services and structures will be reorganised over the next three years. This process will require careful management to maintain service delivery while adapting to new governance models.

2. Clarification on the proposed reorganisation of local government structures in Hertfordshire

Currently, Hertfordshire consists of 10 districts and boroughs alongside the County Council. The proposal is to consolidate these districts and boroughs into two, three or four larger organisational units that would manage all existing services. The reorganisation aims to realign service delivery boundaries, with a focus on practicality and efficiency. As an example; it is likely that the closely linked local authorities of Watford and Three Rivers would be merged into a single unit. The County Council's services would also be redistributed to align with these new geographical boundaries, ensuring that each new organisation covers all relevant services within its area.

3. Integrating grassroots organisations such as the VCFSE into local governance structures during the local government reorganisation

There is uncertainty around the stakeholder and community work stream's plans but there is willingness to facilitate greater involvement and input from grassroots groups. The government aims to maintain local delivery through local area committees, despite the challenge of representing a large population of 1.5 million people.

4. Dividing a population of approximately 1.2 – 1.5 million people into unitary authorities

It is noted that two unitary authorities might be too large, while three might be slightly small currently, but could become appropriate within 5 years. Various configurations were discussed, including combining Watford and Three Rivers with neighbouring areas like Dacorum, St Albans and Hertsmere to achieve suitable population sizes. Political considerations and natural geographic and community boundaries play a significant role in these deliberations, with specific mention of joint strategic planning partnerships and new developments such as Hemel Garden Village influencing the logic of boundaries. The complexity of political representation was acknowledged, with concerns about the reduced number of Councillors in unitary authorities and the need to maintain effective representation for residents. No final decisions have been made yet, and lessons will be drawn from other counties like Surrey and Hampshire that have undergone similar reorganisations. It was suggested that regular updates can be provided to the group to gather feedback as a potential option to improve communication and project progress.

5. Ensuring Equality Impact Assessments in the local government reorganisation

The importance of conducting equality impact assessments was highlighted, emphasising the need for thorough evaluation in a large organisational project such as the local government reorganisation. Officers acknowledged the necessity of including equality impact assessments as part of business cases submitted by individual councils, with a final consolidated

assessment expected in the upcoming November submission. It was noted that all council papers, regardless of the subject, routinely include equality impact assessments alongside legal and financial considerations.

6. Funding for third sector organisations and how they might be affected in the future

It was acknowledged that the exact impact has not yet been fully worked through, but grants given directly to third parties may be routed through different organisations. Discretionary grants will be subject to decisions by new organisations based on their financial positions and the services provided. This may appear bleak, but the Council will strive to maintain existing payments and costs within its budget. However, after the transition date of 1 April 2028, decisions will ultimately rest with the new authority.

12 POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) provided an update on his role, strategic priorities and achievement in policing in the community. The PCC's role is strategic, focusing on setting priorities, accountability, budget management and commissioning community safety services. Over the past year, the PCC has appointed a new Chief Constable, and published a police and crime plan with 5 key priorities; making Hertfordshire safer through crime prevention, strengthening local policing and public confidence, tackling neighbourhood crime and antisocial behaviour (with a focus on burglary in areas like Three Rivers), protecting vulnerable groups from violence and exploitation, and bringing offenders to justice, while supporting victims. Initiative such as Operation Hotspot have successfully reduced crime and antisocial behaviour by 14.5% in targeted hotspots. The PCC highlighted efforts to increase neighbourhood policing with additional officers and PCSOs, improve police visibility, and launch partnership programmes targeting town centre safety and retail crime reduction, including shoplifting and assaults on retail workers. The overarching goals are to reduce crime, solve more cases, and enhance community trust through visible policing and collaborative efforts.

13 COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

The Community Safety & Safeguarding Manager provided an update on Prevent, Youth Action Panel and Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs).

i. Prevent

The Prevent Strategy is a key priority and highlights the Prevent Delivery Plan, a living document supported by Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), which guides local partnership actions on awareness, concerns and reporting. Training sessions for staff and partners were conducted last year, with continued opportunities planned. Significant updates include the introduction of the new Prevent National Referral form and legislative changes reflected on the Council's website. The officer mentioned a major legislative development which is the Terrorism Protection of Premises Act 2025 (Martyn's Law), which mandates enhanced security and preparedness at certain venues and events to mitigate terrorist threats. The Community Safety team intends to collaborate with local venues to ensure compliance and readiness under this new law.

In response to a question raised regarding the possibility of conducting a risk assessment related to the recent developments in the police, the officer responded by indicating the need to consult with HCC, after which she will be able to provide feedback on the matter. – **Action** Michelle Wright.

ii. Youth Action Panel

Following the end of funding for the 'No More Service', previously managed by Stevenage Borough Council and funded by the OPCC, Three Rivers District Council and Watford

Borough Council have collaborated to continue critical support for youths and their families. This initiative targets young people identified as at risk or involved in crime, exploitation, drug dealing, and antisocial behaviour. A multi-agency approach is employed to manage individuals who are perpetrators, victims or at risk. Referrals can be made through the Council's website either via self-referral, by family members, educational institutions, police or partner agencies. A monthly case assessment group determines actions to support these youths. Despite limited resources, the initiative relies on committed groups from youth services, health, and education sectors.

iii. Police Community Support Officers

Three Rivers District Council has confirmed its continued commitment to community safety by funding the four PCSOs, contributing to a total of twelve PCSOs operating across the district. These uniformed officers maintain a visible presence through regular foot patrols, aiming to deter antisocial behaviour and reduce crime. The PCSOs work collaboratively with the OPCC and Hertfordshire Constabulary as part of the community safety partnership. The Council funds these PCSOs directly, who play a vital role in the district; ensuring that residents, workers and visitors feel safe and supported.

iv. CCTV

Community Safety Officer provided an update on the nine new CCTV cameras funded through CIL application. The locations for these cameras were carefully selected based on police data, partner input, and site visits across various parts of Three Rivers, including Prestwick Road where a replacement camera will be installed, Hayling Road and Otley Way in South Oxhey, with new cameras installed. There will also be new cameras in Delta Gain and at the South Way junction of Furtherfield in Abbots Langley. Furthermore, there will be a replacement camera at the junction between Langley Road and Abbots High Street, a new camera at Catherine Place shopping parade, a replacement camera at Rickmansworth High Street and a new camera at King George V recreational ground in Mill End. The new cameras are twin cameras, allowing for zoning of views, which is an upgrade from the previous single cameras. Public consultations with affected residents and businesses have been completed positively, with some expressing enthusiasm for the new cameras. Electrical testing and column placements have been finalised. The project, spanning 19 months, is nearing completion, with the final step being confirmation of installation dates, which involves coordinating road closures and traffic management to ensure safe installation. Once installed, the cameras will be activated within hours to help detect crime and antisocial behaviour as intended.

In response to a question regarding the cameras, the officer clarified that originally, there were six cameras, and the number of cameras has now increased to nine, with the three brand new cameras. All cameras are movable and redeployable.

14 COUNTY COMMUNITY SAFETY UNIT

Michael Nadasdy from the County Community Safety Unit (CCSU) provided an update highlighting several key initiatives and recent developments. The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) on child exploitation has been finalised and its recommendations approved, aimed at organisations managing children and young people at risk. Recent assessment on mental health, wellbeing and co-occurring substance use have informed Hertfordshire's new Drug and Alcohol Strategy, which includes a dedicated 12-month project addressing substance use and mental health. A briefing on ketamine-related harms, especially among young people, was released due to rising treatment presentations. Since October 2020, over 10,000 drug tests on arrest have been conducted to encourage treatment for substance users and reduce crime, with a focus on shoplifting. The CCSU is leading enforcement efforts against cuckooing, collaborating with local inspectors and community safety managers to standardise approaches based on safeguarding guidelines. The 2024 drug and alcohol deaths audit is completed and available upon request. Additionally, a new Hate Crime Partnership Board has been established with training planned for third-party reporting

centres, and organisations are invited to participate. Updates on bids for tackling serious violence were also shared.

In response to a question raised regarding the scope and limitations of the drug test and arrest programme; the speaker advised that the programme focuses specifically on acquisitive crimes related to the use of crack cocaine and opiates, excluding alcohol from its testing because alcohol consumption is legal and does not have the same legal levers for enforcement as illegal drugs. While alcohol can be a potential cause behind offending behaviour, it is not directly tested under this Home Office scheme. However, drug workers from commissioned services are available in custody to perform triage and refer individuals suspected of having alcohol problems to appropriate treatment services.

Furthermore, the speaker highlighted a critical update regarding the increasing risk of synthetic opioids, particularly fentanyl overdoses in Hertfordshire. A recent suspected fentanyl overdose in Watford resulted in one death and one near-fatality, prompting an imminent drug alert. The speaker emphasised the inevitability of more such incidents occurring locally with opioid users or individuals involved in drug use to raise awareness about the dangers of synthetic opioids. The speaker recommended utilising the local drug information system to report and share intelligence on contaminated or high-strength drugs, facilitating county-wide tracking and analysis. The speaker offered support for organisations unfamiliar with the system and encouraged communication to enhance community safety and response.

15 COMMUNITY STRATEGY

The Partnerships & Inclusion Manager provided an update on the 2024-25 Community Strategy Action Plan, 2024-25 Fund report and Workshop.

i. 2024-25 Community Strategy Action Plan

The officer highlighted the extensive partnership efforts and accomplishments over the past year, encouraging dissemination of the strategy details among the group, communities and services. Key themes discussed include the economy, where engagement with local businesses fell short of expectations, and environmental and community safety initiatives that showed significant progress. Efforts under the 'Belonging' theme included attempts to secure funding for sustainable community hubs, although initial funding applications were unsuccessful, ongoing work continues through the Health Hub workstream with confirmed funding for the next three years.

ii. 2024-25 Fund report

Funding was distributed to four organisations, with three having completed their projects, and one, the Crucial Crew event scheduled for early July. The current fund for 2025-26 stands at £10,000, with contributions from organisations such as Three Rivers District Council, Home Group and Thrive, and potential support from Watford Community Housing. The officer highlighted ongoing fundraising efforts for the next funding round, encouraging partners, local communities, and businesses to participate in fundraising activities like quizzes or events to support future applications and initiatives.

iii. Workshop

The group participated in a slido Q&A exercise.

16 PUBLIC HEALTH

Sarah Perman, Director of Public Health, HCC presented an overview of the current public health landscape, highlighting the newly launched business plan and the impact of local government reforms. The speaker emphasised the use of data from the Herts' Evidence

website to identify key priorities such as addressing health inequalities, life expectancy gaps due to circulatory diseases and COVID-19, and tackling obesity across all age groups. The presentation outlined the mandated public health functions now sitting within local government, the range of services provided, including NHS health checks, sexual health, smoking cessation, weight management, and drug and alcohol recovery. The speaker also described the integration of strategic partnerships, focusing on homelessness and domestic abuse, and the collaboration with district councils on initiatives like the Health Hub. Furthermore, the speaker detailed the organisational structure, reporting to the Chief Fire Officer, and the team's composition of approximately 130 staff. The funding model was explained as a ring fenced grant from the Department of Health and Social Care, totalling around £54 million annually, largely contracted to NHS providers. Current priorities include developing drugs and alcohol delivery plan, transforming health visiting and school nursing services with a focus on family support, and adopting national health protection changes such as the introduction of a new gonorrhoea vaccine. Throughout the presentation the emphasis was on maintaining prevention duties despite financial challenges and fostering partnerships to improve public health outcomes.

Responding to a question the speaker talked about a three-year funding programme called Prevention and Health Inequalities Programme (PHIP), funded by public health grant reserves aimed at supporting local organisations to focus on early help, prevention and reducing health inequalities. The programme targets three main themes; aging well, health weight and economic inactivity due to ill health. The first phase has concluded with impressive proposals from various organisations, some advancing to the next stage. The speaker also highlighted ongoing uncertainties regarding local government reorganisation and devolution but confirmed that public health responsibilities and mandated services will remain with unitary local authorities under current legislation. The speaker emphasised potential opportunities for public health to support broader functions such as skills, employment, transport, housing and strategic planning, aiming for more integrated health considerations at the mayoral and strategic authority levels.

A further question was raised on mental health, whether it featured in the priority. The Director of Public Health explained that HCC has a dedicated team addressing mental health across all age groups, with key initiatives including a multi-agency suicide prevention board and a Real Time Suicide Surveillance System that tracks suicides and attempts to identify emerging patterns for timely intervention. They collaborate with community organisations such as Hector's House and the OLLIE Foundation (One Life Lost is Enough) to deliver targeted programmes and provide long-term suicide bereavement support for affected families and friends. Beyond suicide prevention, there is a strategic shift towards enhancing public mental health by fostering community resilience and supporting children and young people, especially within schools. Initiatives include a pastoral network of teachers focused on mental health needs and exploring the role of school nurses through health service procurement to better support youth mental health.

The discussion also focused on the importance of the third sector in addressing health inequalities and delivering public health services. The critical role of local voluntary organisations was highlighted in reaching diverse communities that broader county-wide initiatives may not effectively engage. The conversation highlighted existing partnerships with voluntary groups across Hertfordshire, including their involvement in programme development, co-production efforts in areas such as domestic abuse, homelessness and substance abuse, and the inclusion of individuals with lived experience to inform public health strategies. There is a clear intent to increase financial support for the voluntary sector by shifting funding from public health grants to these organisations through multi-year contracts like the Prevention and Investment Fund.

Bob Jones from Watford and Three Rivers Trust raised concerns about preserving the voluntary sector, especially as many voluntary groups are structured around existing district and boroughs. The proposed move to fewer unitary authorities could require significant restructuring of voluntary organisations, potentially disrupting both formal and informal

community groups. The speaker highlighted ongoing discussions and collaborations with local groups and charities, encouraging voluntary sector members to engage with forums such as the Herts Community Leaders Forum and attend upcoming meetings. There is particular worry about the informal voluntary sector at the neighbourhood level, which may face challenges in maintaining connections with statutory bodies under the new structure.

The importance of considering the voluntary sector in the reorganisation process is emphasised, with assurance that it remains a priority for local government planning.

17 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None

CHAIR