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## **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  
Thursday, 25 September 2025 from 10.00 am - 11.36 pm.**

**Present:** Councillors

Sarah Nelmes (Chair)

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### **TRDC officers in attendance:**

Kimberley Grout, Associate Director – Corporate, Customer & Community  
Rebecca Young, Head of Strategy & Partnerships  
Shivani Davé, Partnerships & Inclusion Manager  
Michelle Wright, Community Safety & Safeguarding Manager, Prevent Lead  
Marko Kalik, Head of Planning Policy and Conservation  
Elen Dolder, Climate Change, Sustainability, and Recycling Officer  
Anita Hibbs, Committee Officer

### **External attendance:**

Councillor Tim Williams, Hertfordshire County Council  
Peta Mettam, Citizens Advice Service Three Rivers  
Ben Harper, Hertfordshire Constabulary  
Dan Rainbird, Hertfordshire Constabulary  
Michael Nadasdy, County Community Safety Unit (CCSU)  
Lucy Nicolson-James, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC)  
Paraic McKenna, Hertfordshire County Council (HCC)  
Kate Bignell, Hertfordshire County Council, SFYP  
Elizabeth Borg, Community Learning Partnership  
Shirish Chauhan, Three Rivers Chamber  
Hannah Marsh, Watford FC, Community Sports and Education Trust  
Tracy Lazenby, Home Start  
Jo Barrett, Thrive Homes  
Tina Barnard, Watford Community Housing  
Dave Bell, South West Herts Partnership (SWHP)

### **18 WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS & APOLOGIES**

Attendees were welcomed to the meeting and introduced themselves.

### **19 MINUTES AND ACTIONS FROM THE PREVIOUS CONNECTING THREE RIVERS MEETING**

The minutes of the Connecting Three Rivers meeting, held on 18 June 2025 were confirmed as a correct record.

## **20 LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION**

The Head of Strategy & Partnerships delivered a presentation on the current status and future plans regarding Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in Hertfordshire.

In response to a question raised regarding the Council's position on LGR and any potential delay due to the change in the Secretary of State, the Chair responded by confirming that there will be no delay in the LGR process, citing a prompt letter from the new Secretary of State reassuring council leaders and chief executives that the process will continue at the same pace. The Chair also shared personal and council leadership views, indicating support, but stated that the Council has not yet voted on their preferred option of 2, 3 or 4 unitaries.

## **21 LOCAL PLAN**

The Head of Planning Policy & Conservation provided a detailed presentation on the local plan for Three Rivers, explaining the procedural and substantive aspects of developing a new local plan, which outlines the vision for future development, including site allocations and planning policies, all aligned with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

In response to a question raised regarding the implications of LGR, particularly concerning housing needs and planning processes, the officer explained that despite LGR starting in 2028, local plans remain in effect until then, with planning decisions continuing under existing plans, citing Buckinghamshire as an example, still operating under area-specific plans. The questioner challenged the effectiveness of this approach, highlighting practical issues faced by residents, such as difficulties with listed building planning and bin collection, arguing for a more streamlined unitary system to improve efficiency and housing delivery. The board also discussed the complexity of merging different local policies, such as housing allocation and council tax reductions, emphasising the lengthy and complicated process of policy alignment that could take up to 15 years.

A question was raised regarding the attention given to building heights and government instructions favouring urban areas with sustainable transport systems. The officer confirmed that tall buildings policy will be implemented alongside increased density targets, especially in areas with access to tube and train stations. The aim is to achieve higher densities to meet housing needs while navigating government regulations. The agreed approach is to generally increase densities and building heights in accordance with the NPPF, balancing urban growth with environmental considerations.

Responding to a question regarding social housing provisions, the officer explained that a local housing needs assessment has been conducted to support the policy framework. The emerging policy requires that 40% of all housing be affordable, increasing to 50% in greenbelt areas. Within affordable housing quota, 70% must be allocated to social housing, with the remaining 30% designated for other forms of affordable housing. This structured approach aims to address local housing needs effectively.

## **22 ENERGY SUPPLY IN THREE RIVERS**

The Climate Change, Sustainability, and Recycling Officer delivered a presentation on a comprehensive initiative to develop a heat network, utilising waste heat from a proposed hyperscale data centre in Abbots Langley.

A question was raised regarding the cost and commercial viability of heat networks. The officer explained that while the energy source won't be free, it should offer a cheaper alternative to encourage retrofitting of buildings. Efforts to engage local businesses include direct emails, door-to-door visits, newsletters, social media, and leveraging contacts. Although there are currently no grants available, past support for small businesses with retrofitting (solar insulation, heat pumps) was noted, with future opportunities to be communicated to engaged parties. The officer also addressed regulatory concerns that were raised, regarding the lack of full regulation of heat networks, which is expected to be resolved by 2027.

## **23 LOCAL CRIME TRENDS - PRIORITIES AND ENGAGEMENT**

Ben Harper, the newly appointed Neighbourhood Police Inspector for Three Rivers introduced himself and highlighted that the role had been vacant for over 10 years, previously shared with the Detective Inspector. With the arrival of a new Chief Constable, a dedicated Neighbourhood Inspector role has been reinstated. He outlined significant structural changes within Hertfordshire Constabulary, including the division of the county into East and West Hertfordshire policing areas, reducing the number of Community Safety Partnerships from ten to six districts. West Hertfordshire now covers Dacorum, Three Rivers, Watford, St. Albans and Harpenden, while East Hertfordshire includes Welwyn Hatfield, Stevenage, North Hertfordshire and Broxbourne. The management hierarchy has been adjusted accordingly, with two Chief Superintendents overseeing local policing for east and west regions, respectively. Additionally, a dedicated Detective Superintendent manages CID teams, and six Chief Inspectors focus solely on neighbourhood policing and response teams, some covering dual areas such as Watford and Three Rivers.

Dan Rainbird, the new Chief Inspector for Three Rivers and Watford at Hertfordshire Constabulary introduced himself and outlined a strategic shift in local policing. Drawing on experience from both county and inner-city forces, he emphasised a move away from extensive meeting attendance and constant community engagement towards a more balanced approach. The new strategy prioritises police officers actively targeting high-harm and prolific offenders and focusing on impactful crime reduction, while support officers handle community engagement. The speaker highlighted the need to assess the value of engagement events, favouring those with meaningful community impact, such as large public events, over less effective ones like coffee meetings, and expressed his commitment to reviewing the impact of these changes over the next three months. Additionally, he spoke about the significant restructuring of the neighbourhood policing team to improve operational effectiveness. The new approach aligns teams so that the Rickmansworth, Abbots Langley and South Oxhey teams work concurrently, enabling a more focused and proactive policing. Furthermore, the Community Safety Unit (CSU) is now fully staffed after a period without an Anti-Social Behaviour Officer. The speaker then highlighted the strategic priorities, which include addressing robbery, burglary, motor vehicle theft, violence against women and girls, hate crime and prevention initiatives, as well as the police operation called 'Operation Lockout' which will be running throughout October in Hertfordshire.

In response to a question regarding cybercrime and security, the Chief Inspector responded by explaining that within the Metropolitan Police, there is a significant counter-terrorism unit responsible for addressing cybercrime on a national level, providing guidance and best practices to other police forces. Additionally, he mentioned that Hertfordshire has its own detective units handling local cybercrime offenses. For county-specific concerns, individuals can contact the relevant Hertfordshire department while national-level data and statistics are managed by the larger counter-terrorism network within the National Police Service.

## **24 POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER UPDATE**

Lucy Nicolson-James from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner provided a brief update stating that there was not much new information this month. The Summer Town Centres project has recently concluded, and the focus is now shifting to engagement activities related to a DNA pilot aimed at reducing rural thefts, particularly in areas with equine facilities.

## **25 COUNTY COMMUNITY SAFETY UNIT**

Michael Nadasdy from the County Community Safety Unit provided an update highlighting community safety initiatives coordinated by local agencies. A public survey on the Violence Against Women and Girls Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) recently closed, with over 3000 responses. A working group is being established to oversee progress and community partners are invited to participate. Additionally, a multi-agency working group will be formed to address cuckooing issues across Hertfordshire, building on existing best practices and toolkits. The speaker also highlighted the upcoming Hate Crime Awareness Week in October, which includes interactive sessions with sensory dogs, and a performance by Electric Umbrella.

Responding to a question regarding cybercrime the speaker highlighted the active role of the fraud and cyber team at the constabulary in engaging with the public and businesses to raise awareness about cyber protection. Collaborative efforts with the Police and Crime Commissioner's Office and the Chamber of Commerce have been instrumental in advising businesses on safeguarding themselves against cyber threats. He emphasised that businesses themselves are primarily responsible for their cyber security, with human error – such as falling for phishing emails – being a common vulnerability. The speaker urged continuous vigilance and encouraged businesses to invest in cyber training for their staff.

Furthermore, Shirish Chauhan from Three Rivers Chamber of Commerce provided information on an ongoing planning of a workshop to engage and support local businesses in cybersecurity matters.

## **26 CONNECTING THREE RIVERS FUND UPDATE**

The Partnerships & Inclusion Manager provided an update on the fund, which recently opened for applications, receiving 12 submissions totalling approximately £28,000. Watford Community Housing has contributed to increase the funding pot to around £18,000 through local partnership donations. Due to the limited funds compared to the total requested amount, some applications will be declined. The advisory group is scheduled to meet on 10 October to make decisions regarding the allocation of the available funds.

## **27 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Hannah Marsh from Watford FC, Community Sports and Education Trust introduced herself as a recent appointee with a background in football. The speaker highlighted her transition into her new role at the trust and emphasised her commitment to promoting healthy relationships and addressing violence against women and girls, leveraging the predominantly male football supporter base for outreach. Furthermore, the speaker mentioned that she is actively involved with VAWG (Violence Against Women & Girls), and is preparing to attend a board meeting. Additionally, she spoke about her engagement with the IOM (Integrated Offender Management) team, focusing on reintegrating offenders back into the community, indicating opportunities for partnership and community support initiatives.

Tina Barnard from Watford Community Housing informed the board about ongoing discussions between Watford Community Housing and Thrive Homes regarding a potential merger scheduled for 1 June 2026. If the merger proceeds, the combined housing association will become the largest social housing provider in both Watford and Three Rivers. The speaker also announced her decision to step down if the merger takes place.

**28      NEXT MEETING DATES**

11 December 2025  
18 March 2026

**CHAIR**