

Community and Voluntary Sector Grant Agreement COMMITTEE REPORT

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE - 26 JANUARY 2026

**GENERAL PUBLIC SERVICES AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE -
13 JANUARY 2026**

PART I

**COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY SECTOR GRANT AGREEMENTS
(ADCCC)**

1 Summary

- 1.1 This report provides information on the organisations and projects that officers propose to continue to fund with existing budget already allocated to the Strategy and Partnerships Team.
- 1.2 The existing service level agreements with Citizens Advice Service Three Rivers (CASTR), Watford and Three Rivers Trust (W3RT), Home-Start Watford and Three Rivers, Watford FC Community Sports & Education Trust, Services for Young People and Herts Mind Network extend to 31 March 2026.
- 1.3 This report recommends funding options until 31 March 2029. This will provide local organisations with security for the next 3 years and manage the transition into the unitary authority.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 That the General Public Services & Community Engagement Committee:
 - 2.1.1 agrees to continue to match fund a mental health support provision with budget already allocated to Strategy and Partnerships;
 - 2.1.2 agrees to an agile and targeted approach across the district for the grant agreement with Services for Young People;
 - 2.1.3 agrees to a new grant agreement with Roundabout Transport;
 - 2.1.4 agrees to increase funding to Citizens Advice Service Three Rivers from £259,290 to £260,000 from existing budget allocated to Strategy and Partnerships;
 - 2.1.5 agrees to enter all contracts and/or grant agreements proposed within this report for three years of any funding allocations under £25,000, subject to the annual budget setting process;
 - 2.1.6 agrees to recommend to the Policy & Resources Committee to enter all contracts and/or grant agreements above £25,000; and
 - 2.1.7 agrees to recommend to the Policy & Resources Committee to delegate authority to the Associate Director of Corporate, Customer and Community for grant extensions of up to 6 months.

| Organisation | 2026-29 Funding allocation (£) |
|--|--------------------------------|
| Citizens Advice Service Three Rivers (CASTR) | 260,000 |
| Watford and Three Rivers Trust (W3RT) | 40,000 |
| Home-Start Watford and Three Rivers | 4,800 |
| Watford FC Community, Sports and Education Trust | 5,000 |
| Roundabout Transport | 5,500 |
| Services for Young People (Hertfordshire County Council) | 2,000 |
| Mental Health | 10,000 |
| Total | 327,300 |

Report prepared by: Shivani Davé, Partnerships and Inclusion Manager

3 Details

- 3.1 The Strategy and Partnerships Team has funding allocated to support organisations in addressing identified needs and challenges within the District. This funding is predominantly used to support the Community and Voluntary sector within Three Rivers.
- 3.2 Community Development is a key workstream within the Strategy and Partnerships Team, and the reach of this work supports in reducing long term demand on statutory services such as homelessness.
- 3.3 A 2024 House of Lords Library briefing highlighted that the VCSE (Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise) sector delivers substantial economic and social value through paid and unpaid work and locally delivered services that avert higher-cost statutory interventions.
- 3.4 A DLUHC (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) review (2022) of evidence highlighted community hubs can reduce demand on statutory services, improve wellbeing and lower health-care and social-care costs by preventing escalation of needs.
- 3.5 Funding allocation was last agreed in 2022, with agreements made from 2023-2026.
- 3.6 As a result of reductions, there is currently £67,300 available, with an additional £259,290 allocated to the Citizens Advice Service Three Rivers. Funding allocations have not increased since 2018.
- 3.7 All funding awards are managed and overseen by council officers, involving quarterly performance and monitoring meetings to ensure service delivery and

management of funding requirements, advancement of collaborative opportunities, and development of funding agreements.

3.8 Annual performance on all services funded through this allocation is provided annually to councillors through a report (Appendix 1) published within Members Information Bulletin in August 2025.

3.9 Committee receives annual presentations from CASTR and W3RT to scrutinise the work and promote the achievements of the SLAs.

3.10 The information below provides an overview of organisations recommended for funding from 2026-2029. The amounts are subject to Medium Term Financial Planning budgetary decisions.

3.11 Citizens Advice Service Three Rivers (CASTR)

3.11.1 In Three Rivers CASTR manage 3 local offices in South Oxhey, Abbots Langley, and Rickmansworth. They offer an outreach service in the community and currently provide a fortnightly advice service at the South Oxhey Foodbank, a weekly advice service at the Mill End Foodbank.

3.11.2 Over the last few years, there has been a shift in need and residents with a lower level of need accessing information online. As a result of this shift, CASTR have found the presenting needs of clients accessing support directly are much more complex, and one client often requires several appointments or support over several months to resolve issues.

3.11.3 During 2024-25 CASTR provided:

- 7,664 residents with support
- 2,887 residents supported to receive full benefit entitlement
- 1,179 residents supported with debt related need, with 2,655 issues supported.
- £1,565,363 of financial gain to Three Rivers residents

3.11.4 Between April – September 2025 CASTR provided:

- 3,683 resident with support.
- 1,339 residents supported to receive full benefit entitlement.
- 582 residents supported with debt related need, with 1,254 issues supported.
- £687,173 of financial gain to Three Rivers residents.

3.11.5 CASTR uses a financial modelling tool to estimate the savings their service generates. This tool is estimating for every £1 invested, £35.95 in public value is delivered, and £20.74 value for people they support.

3.11.6 This tool also estimates that fiscal savings to the council by preventing homelessness, evictions and mental health support total £254,771, with an additional £26,400 through council tax arrears repayments.

3.11.7 The tool estimates the total value of providing debt advice is £953,171, and the public value of improving wellbeing is £13,616,212.

3.11.8 The tool has miscalculated funding for CASTR, with the tool showing approx. £20,000 lower than expected, which may alter financial modelling. This has been reported.

3.12 Watford and Three Rivers Trust (W3RT)

3.12.1 Watford and Three Rivers Trust provide support and guidance to the community and voluntary sector through the development of community organisations. These organisations are supported with business planning, board development, funding applications, training, volunteers and partnership collaboration.

3.12.2 W3RT manages the Sustainability Fund and Connecting Three Rivers Fund, which provides community grants to organisations and community groups based in Three Rivers.

3.12.3 Our work with W3RT has resulted in improved relationships and opportunities with community based groups, which have directly benefited our residents, through coordination of cost of living support, and dissemination of Household Support Fund. W3RT also supported 70 organisations in 2024-25 with funding applications and advice, ensuring investment in the wider voluntary sector is gained for Three Rivers residents.

3.13 Home-Start Watford and Three Rivers

3.13.1 Homestart provides support to families with a child under the age of 5 through home visits, group play sessions or a counselling project. Families are assessed and a volunteer matching process is undertaken for home visits. Volunteers are provided with training, supervision and support to ensure consistent support to families.

3.13.2 The top 3 needs identified in 2024-25 were stress and anxiety (80%), mental health (70%), physical health (60%).

3.14 Watford FC Community Sports and Education Trust

3.14.1 Active Watford and Three Rivers had been delivered by Watford FC Community Sports and Education Trust, to support and encourage inactive residents to become physically active and maintain regular activity.

3.14.2 Most of this project was funded through Premier League Funding. After this funding ended, the contributions made by the council were not sufficient to extend the service. Active Watford and Three Rivers ended in 2024-25.

3.14.3 As the Trust will no longer be delivering Active Watford and Three Rivers, it is recommended that the funding allocation go towards the delivery of a football and mental wellbeing project targeted at women.

3.14.4 Since 2022, the council has utilised public health funding supported the delivery of "Man On", a football and mental wellbeing project for men delivered by the Trust. Funding for this project has been secured by the Trust until June 2027.

3.14.5 This will also support and progress corporate initiatives on White Ribbon and tackling Violence Against Women and Girls.

3.15 Roundabout Transport

- 3.15.1 The charity addresses social isolation by employing 2 staff who manage a fleet of minibuses. These minibuses can be hired by local charities and community groups at a subsidised rate where other transport options may not be available.
- 3.15.2 Herts Mind Network secured alternative funding for domestic abuse support for standard-medium risk cases, therefore, making some funding available within the community grants budget
- 3.15.3 Between March and October 2025, 1,948 journey's were provided using Roundabout Transport vehicles, and approximately 6,914 Three Rivers residents used the services.
- 3.15.4 It is recommended that £5,500 be awarded to Roundabout Transport to support this service in the district.

3.16 Services for Young People

- 3.16.1 Services for Young People (Hertfordshire County Council) deliver Hertfordshire's youth provision. Over recent years the service has undergone significant restructure, redirecting their aims from prevention to targeted intervention.
- 3.16.2 Due to changes in resource, Services for Young People have not been able to consistently provide a youth service in Abbots Langley, and this provision is reviewed by Hertfordshire County Council on a termly basis.
- 3.16.3 It is recommended that the funding be allocated to Services for Young People to deliver agile, targeted sessions across the district from 2026, subject to needs identified by the Community Safety Partnership and the Youth Strategy Partnership.
- 3.16.4 Funding an agile service allows the Community Safety Partnership to be reactive and responsive to hot spots of anti-social behaviour or concerns relating to young people to prevent escalation into the Youth Action Panel.
- 3.16.5 This will additionally improve access to mental wellbeing, education and training support for young people engaged across the district, as well as any other onward referral required.

3.17 Mental Health and Complex Needs

- 3.17.1 Since 2017 Three Rivers District Council has secured funding and contributed towards the Community Support Service delivered by Herts Mind Network. The service provides outreach, advice and support to residents experiencing mental ill-health in a way that addresses the individual needs of the person.
- 3.17.2 During 2024/25 82 clients were supported through the service, with 69 referrals received.
- 3.17.3 Due to increasing costs and a reduction in funding available, the future of the Community Support Service as it currently exists has not been confirmed. This report proposes to continue match funding for a mental health support provision for residents of Three Rivers.

3.18 2026-29 funding allocation & contract/grant agreement amounts

| Organisation | Funding allocation (£) |
|--|------------------------|
| Citizens Advice Service Three Rivers | 260,000 |
| Watford and Three Rivers Trust | 40,000 |
| Home-Start Watford and Three Rivers | 4,800 |
| Watford FC Community, Sports and Education Trust | 5,000 |
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| Mental Health | 10,000 |
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4 Options and Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1 Funding for the organisations listed above hasn't been increased since 2018, despite the impact of inflation on costs and employee national insurance rises.
- 4.2 A three year agreement is proposed as organisations have expressed concern about staff retention, increasing core costs, officer resource in identifying funding instead of service delivery when short term funding is provided.
- 4.3 Organisations have expressed concerns about the impact of Local Government Reorganisation on the community and voluntary sector. Confirming funding until 2029 supports stability for these organisations while decisions on funding are being made by unitary authorities.

5 Policy/Budget Reference and Implications

- 5.1 The recommendations in this report are within the Council's agreed service plans (Strategy and Partnerships) and budgets.
- 5.2 The recommendations in this report relate to the achievement of the following service volumes for Citizens Advice Service
 - 5.2.1 Number of clients supported (8,000)
 - 5.2.2 Number of clients assisted with debt (2,000)
 - 5.2.3 Amount of debt written off (£450,000)
 - 5.2.4 Average amount per client of debt written off (£14,000)
- 5.3 The impact of the recommendations on these service volumes is:

To provide Citizens Advice Service Three Rivers with the resource to deliver services to residents of and people working in Three Rivers.

6 Financial Implications

6.1 Recommendations are subject to annual budget setting decision.

7 Legal Implications

7.1 Review and implementation of new service level agreements will take place subject to agreement

8 Equal Opportunities Implications

8.1 Relevance Test

| | |
|--|-----|
| Has a relevance test been completed for Equality Impact? | Yes |
| Did the relevance test conclude a full impact assessment was required? | No |

8.2 Impact Assessment

The short impact assessment identified several communities with protected characteristics will be support through the funding agreements. The EQIA did not identify any negative impact to communities through the provision of funding for those organisations listed. Funding will support in addressing inequalities and improving access to services for residents with protected characteristics.

9 Staffing Implications

9.1 Requirement of staff in Strategy and Partnerships Team to develop grant agreements, engage with funded organisations as well as proactively monitor and manage funding.

10 Community Safety Implications

10.1 Community safety would be impacted by an increase in anti social behaviour if these projects were not funded. Lack of mental health support, increase in social isolation and lack of youth provision would impact on community safety services.

10.2 This would place increased demand on Strategy and Partnerships, Housing Services and Customer Experience, as well as statutory partners such as Hertfordshire Constabulary and Hertfordshire County Council.

11 Public Health Implications

11.1 Public health would be impacted by mental health need, social isolation and increased barriers to access support.

11.2 This would place increased demand on Strategy and Partnerships, Housing Services and Customer Experience, as well as statutory partners such as NHS and Hertfordshire County Council.

12 Customer Services Centre Implications

12.1 Customer Services would experience increased demand if there was a reduction in community based services.

13 Risk and Health & Safety Implications

13.1 The Council has agreed its risk management strategy which can be found on the website at <http://www.threerivers.gov.uk>. In addition, the risks of the proposals in the report have also been assessed against the Council's duties under Health and Safety legislation relating to employees, visitors and persons affected by our operations. The risk management implications of this report are detailed below.

13.2 The subject of this report is covered by the Strategy and Partnerships service plan. Any risks resulting from this report will be included in the risk register and, if necessary, managed within this/these plan(s).

| Nature of Risk | Consequence | Suggested Control Measures | Response (tolerate, treat, terminate, transfer) | Risk Rating (combination of likelihood and impact) |
|--|--|---|--|---|
| Funded organisation ceases to exist | Funding awarded but not yet used would be lost | Funding amounts over £9,000 will not be awarded in one go, but at intervals throughout the year | Tolerate | 2 |
| Organisation cannot meet conditions of the grant agreement | Failure to deliver agreed service | Quarterly monitoring meetings enable opportunity to support with challenges and identify solutions at an earlier stage. | Treat | 6 |
| Funding allocation is cut from the establishment | Organisation can no longer operate. | Any budgetary changes be consulted on in advance | Tolerate | 6 |

13.3 The above risks are scored using the matrix below. The Council has determined its aversion to risk and is prepared to tolerate risks where the combination of impact and likelihood scores 6 or less.

| Very Likely Likelihood ↓ Remote | Low | High | Very High | Very High |
|---------------------------------------|--------|--------|-----------|-----------|
| | 4 | 8 | 12 | 16 |
| Low | Medium | High | Very High | Very High |
| 3 | 6 | 9 | 12 | |
| Low | Low | Medium | High | High |
| 2 | 4 | 6 | 8 | |
| Low | Low | Low | Low | Low |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | |
| Impact | | | | |
| Low -----> Unacceptable | | | | |

Impact Score
 4 (Catastrophic)
 3 (Critical)
 2 (Significant)
 1 (Marginal)

Likelihood Score
 4 (Very Likely ($\geq 80\%$))
 3 (Likely (21-79%))
 2 (Unlikely (6-20%))
 1 (Remote ($\leq 5\%$))

13.4 In the officers' opinion none of the new risks above, were they to come about, would seriously prejudice the achievement of the Strategic Plan and are therefore operational risks. The effectiveness of the management of operational risks is reviewed by the Audit Committee annually

Data Quality

Data sources:

Service Level Agreement Report 2024-25.

[Voluntary and community sector contribution to society - House of Lords Library](#)

[Rapid evidence review of community initiatives - GOV.UK](#)

2025-26 (Q1&2) Service Level Report for Citizens A

Data checked by:

Shivani Davé, Partnerships and Inclusion Manager

Data rating:

| | | |
|----------|-------------------|----------|
| 1 | Poor | |
| 2 | Sufficient | x |
| 3 | High | |

Background Papers

APPENDICES / ATTACHMENTS

Appendix 1: Service Level Agreement Report 2024-25

