

**HITCHIN AREA COMMITTEE
26 MAY 2015**

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

AGENDA ITEM No.

12

TITLE OF REPORT: GRANT APPLICATIONS & COMMUNITY UPDATE

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF POLICY & COMMUNITY SERVICES

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 To advise the Committee on the current expenditure and balances of the Area Committee delegated budgets.
- 1.2 To bring to the Committee's attention details of recent requests received for Area Committee Grant Funding made by community groups and local organisations.
- 1.3 To advise the Committee of the activities and schemes with which the Community Officer has been involved.
- 1.4 To bring to the Committee's attention some important community based activities that will take place during the next few months.
- 1.5 To advise the Committee of progress in regard to the ongoing Grants Policy review, and any changes, already agreed, which will come into place from this meeting onwards.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to note the budgetary expenditure, balances and carry forwards from the Development, Visioning and Ward Budgets as set out in Appendix A and B
- 2.2 That the Committee notes and agrees the deduction of £1600 from the area committee's budget to enable sufficient budget to fund districtwide organisations for financial year 2015 only (see para 7.6) pending the outcome of the authority's Grants review.
- 2.3 That the Committee considers, discusses and agrees by resolution on each, award of one year funding for financial year 2015 only, as made previously under 'Minor' Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), to each of the following organisations (para 8.1);
Hitchin Town Twinning
Hitchin Festival
- 2.4 That the Committee notes the Council policy position outlined at 8.1.2 in regard to town centre partnership funding across the district
- 2.5 The Committee considers grant funding of £1,080 to Daisychains towards sensory play equipment, trips out and volunteer training (as outlined in 8.2.1 Appendix C)

- 2.6 The Committee considers grant funding of £1,500 (being the maximum the Community Officer is allowed to recommend) to PHASE in order to run projects to combat mental health issues and self harming for young people in secondary schools in Hitchin (as outlined in 8.2.2 Appendix D)
- 2.7 That the Committee endorses the actions taken by the Community Officer to promote greater community capacity and well-being for Hitchin.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To ensure the Committee is kept informed of the work of the Community Officer.
- 3.2 This report is intended to inform Members of the financial resources available to the Committee. It draws attention to the current budgetary situation, assists in the effective financial management of the Area Committee's budget and ensures actions are performed within the Authority's Financial Regulations, the Council's Constitution, and the guidance of the existing Grants policy.
- 3.3 The awarding of financial assistance to voluntary organisations and the use of discretionary spending allows the Committee to further the aims expressed in the Priorities for the District.
- 3.4 Production of this report is a requirement of the 'Priorities for the District' in which the Community Officer is required to produce a formal report to the Area Committee a minimum of four times per annum in line with the Civic Calendar.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 There are no alternative options being proposed other than those detailed within the text of this report. However in the course of debate at committee, Members may wish to comment and offer additional views on any of the items included within this report.

5. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS

- 5.1 Consultation with Members has occurred in connection with the allocation of funds for Community Projects
- 5.2 Consultation with the respective officers and external agencies/groups has taken place with regard to funding proposals for Area Committee Discretionary and Development Funds.

6. FORWARD PLAN

- 6.1 This Report does not contain a recommendation on a key decision and has not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1 Members are asked to note the information detailed in Appendix A Area Committee Budget Spread sheet, which relates to the Area Committee budget balances for the end of the financial year 2014/15.

- 7.2 Members are asked to note the information detailed in Appendix B Area Committee Budget Spread sheet, which relates to the Area Committee budget balances for the end of the financial year 2015/16.
- 7.3 The spread sheet also details pre-allocated sums carried forward from the previous financial years including balances and past expenditure relating to the allocated and un-allocated Area Capital Visioning Budgets available to the Committee.
- 7.4 The current level of unallocated funds within the Area Committee's 2015/16 Area Grant Budget is **£35,293**
- 7.5 There are no funds within the Area Committee's 2014/15 Area Grant Budget that remain uncommitted. However, there are **£16,277** available allocated to generic headings.
- 7.6 Members should note that one of the recommendations arising from the Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish Group on the Council's grant making process (July 2013) was that a 'district wide pot' should be established in order to enable payments to be made to applicants whose project covered the whole of North Herts, without need to present and apply to each of the Council's five area committees; on further consideration, the Task and Finish Group considered, in their report back to Cabinet in July 2013, that achieving such a pot by removing money from area committees may not be the most appropriate, but that the Head of Policy and Community Services be tasked with considering this issue as part of the grants review.

In the process of the overall grants policy review to date, the Head of Policy and Community Service has highlighted not only that multiple applications to area committees is resource intensive for both applicant and Council officers/administrative costs but nor does it accord with the Council's Constitution in regard to area committees, which states at 9.8.2 community (h);

- (h) To establish and maintain relationships with outside bodies/voluntary organisations operating specifically within the area including, where appropriate, the provision of discretionary grant aid/financial support etc. **but excluding grants for district-wide activities (as determined by the Head of Policy and Community Services).**

It has therefore been agreed in discussion with the Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement and Rural Affairs that a small budget of £6.1k be established **for the financial year 2015 only**, by reducing each area committee grant by a proportionate amount toward this districtwide budget. The relevant amounts to be deducted from each area committee budget are as follows;

Area Committee	£
Baldock	700
Hitchin	1,600
Letchworth	1,600
Royston	900
Southern Rural	1,300
Total	£6,100

Awards from the budget will be made under existing delegations, following discussion with the portfolio holder for Community Engagement and Rural Affairs. Applications received will be included within this report to area committees, and the decision notice published thereafter in the Members Information Service.

This is only intended to be an interim measure, as there are no alternative budgets available from which to create a districtwide pot. Once the review of Major Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and grant process is completed shortly, then the way in which all districtwide activities are funded can be considered and agreed together.

8. PROJECT/ ACTIVITY/ SCHEME DETAILS

8.1 Update on Memorandum of Understanding Recipients

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) grants were originally allocated for a period of three years by the Hitchin Area Committee in 2012 in order to provide a level of financial stability to a number of local groups and organisations. That grant period has now completed at the end of March 2015. The final decision in regard to payment of both major (districtwide) awards under Memorandum of Understanding agreements, and minor (local area) MoUs will be taken during 2015; in brief, larger awards now need to be treated as contractual arrangements, and minor MoUs, awarded by area committees need greater visibility in regard to decision making, and to provide an adequate audit trail.

The new Grant Policy will be available as a consultation document for a yet to be scheduled all member workshop during 2015, for subsequent adoption and implementation from 1st April 2016.

Members are therefore requested at this meeting to consider how to allocate **for one year only** the minor MoU amount as awarded from the area committee budget in 2014/15, which has rolled forward into this year's committee budget. We would invite members to discuss each previous recipient and amount, informed by officer advice and comments, in order that these decisions can be captured by way of formal resolution for each.

In 2012, six local organisations received MoU grant funding from the Hitchin Area Committee's budgets. Over the three year period there may have been changes to the needs of those organisations which are outlined in an update below. Two of the organisations are no longer operational. Funding allocated to their MoU which was not released, and was agreed to be reallocated to other 'community projects'.

The remaining four organisations have been contacted and requested to outline their funding requirements for the 2015/16 financial year utilising the general Community Grant process.

8.1.1 Hitchin Link Town Twinning Association

No update or application for grant funding has been received.

8.1.2 Hitchin Town Centre Initiative (formerly paid under major and minor MoUs)

Members are reminded that the Council's policy in regard to town centre partnerships is to gradually phase out and ultimately withdraw from grant funding in order that town centres become self sustaining (Council, budget setting 2010/11). The Council are also a significant contributor to the BID process, providing officer resource in the assessment and collection of the

levies, BID renewal process, and, for Hitchin, a levy in the amount of £4,756 per annum on its assets within the BID area.

8.1.3 Hitchin Festival

No update or application for grant funding has been received

8.1.4 Hitchin Senior Citizens Welfare Committee

The committee have agreed that as they have enough resources from within their existing reserves they do not need grant funding for this financial year.

8.1.5 Apna Duniya Play Group

The group provided Breakfast and After School and Holiday Club based at Wilshere Dacre School. Funding had been provided to the group since 2003. The last payment was made in June 2013 and officers were informed that the group had ceased to operate by Wilshere Dacre School in May 2014.

8.1.6 Soundbase

Were awarded a MoU grant in 2009 which completed its three year period in 2012. There was no MoU grant award in 2012 and the funds allocated to Soundbase under the MoU heading on the Area Committee budget sheet have now been allocated to Community Projects under the Development Budget.

Soundbase has since applied for funding for individual initiatives via the Community Grant process. They were awarded grant funding of £1,250 in March 2014 towards the cost of a creative media package. It was proposed that the session would run from March 24th to May 30th 2014. Young people explored a range of artistic interests such as vocal, instruments, rapping, DJing and film making etc. The sessions were aimed to improve confidence, teamwork and punctuality and to contribute towards participant's self development.

8.2 Grant requests

8.2.1 Daisychains pre-school support group

Daisychains provide support for the development of pre-school aged children with additional needs and their families through sharing, free play, arts and crafts, music and singing, sensory play and communication. It is an informal support group run by experienced volunteers. They create a safe and friendly space for parents and carers to build positive relationships and support networks. The group supplements local provision and sign post families to further information on groups.

The group started up in June 2014 and run weekly sessions on Thursday afternoons at Christchurch on Bedford Road, Hitchin. They have been successful in raising funding to cover the cost of their running costs. However, as a newly formed group financial assistance from grant funding would be extremely helpful. The group wish to purchase some sensory play equipment, digital camera and subsidise the cost of trips out for group members and training for volunteers. They are requesting £1,080 towards the cost of this. (outlined in Appendix C)

8.2.2 PHASE -project to work with young people struggling with self harm

PHASE are seeking £6,000 funding to provide three support groups one in each Hitchin secondary school for young people who are struggling with self-harm. The eight week course will be a safe space for young people to begin to understand some of their triggers and emotions, and also a chance to explore more healthy coping strategies.

Funding will cover the staffing and volunteer costs of planning and delivering these courses as well as the materials needed.

In addition, PHASE would also like to run a drop-in service called 'Creative Space' as follow-on support for people who have attended a group. This will provide; art activities, themed discussions around mental health issues, with trained volunteers / staff available to talk to. Creative Space is envisaged to run fortnightly, in term-time, for a year. It will encourage continued peer support and provide opportunities to increase self-esteem. Funding will cover the staffing and volunteer costs of running this, the art materials required, and also allow the provision of a professional art therapist to input into some of the sessions. At the end of the year, some of the pieces will be displayed as part of a local art exhibition.

The support groups will take place in Hitchin Boys, Hitchin Girls Schools and The Priory School targeting up to 18 young people aged between 11 and 18 years old. The drop-in service will provide on-going support for those who have attended these sessions in addition to up to 50 young people.

PHASE are in the process of seeking funding from other sources who have been approached. At the time of writing they have not received confirmation from other funding streams, therefore the organisation are requesting the total amount of the project cost.

There are other agencies currently developing district wide initiatives to address this issue. They will be seeking funding via the central government 'early intervention fund' and the districts 'Health and Wellbeing' partnership. The issue of mental wellbeing in young people including self-harm issues has been brought to the attention of local MP Oliver Heald and the Secretary of State. Officers will ensure that the PHASE project will be aware and work in partnership with these agencies to ensure that no there is no duplication of services / projects.

(outlined in Appendix D)

8.3 Update on grants awarded on 10th June 2014

8.3.1 Bancroft Project

The Bancroft project for homeless people is a service providing a Sunday lunch and hot drinks to the homeless and disadvantaged people of Hitchin and North Herts. The project also provides a 'family' fellowship in a friendly and homely atmosphere, provides help for the 'rough sleepers' through the provision of small packs of necessities, counselling support and also provides information advice and guidance on benefit, housing and employment matters.

They were coordinating a sports mentoring and football project which has now been taken over by Hitchin Community Football Club. The funding they received last year has been used to cover the cost of venue hire and other expenses are funded by means of donations. The group is in the process of applying for funding for 2015/16 from the Hertfordshire Community Foundation. There are also a number of initiatives being established through the Public Health Hertfordshire funding to analyse the impact homelessness has on the overall wellbeing of individuals, with further larger funding ringfenced to provide improvement and support in due course.

8.3.2 Early Days Playgroup

Early Days Playgroup has not yet raised all the funds necessary to cover the cost of the outside play area. They have been trying to raise £15,000 needed to install outside play equipment at their site adjacent to Oughton Primary School. Since the £1,500 grant funding from Hitchin Committee was awarded the group have gathered two further quotes for the outside play area and have decided to go with a company called Setter Play who are a well respected company that has installed playground equipment in many Hertfordshire schools. However, in the last 12 months, the costs have risen, therefore the group are planning to submit further applications for funding to both Awards for All and Children in Need.

Hitchin Youth Trust has contributed £2,000 Grant Funding towards the project and staff and committee members at Early Days have raised an extra £1,500 by having coffee mornings, car boot Christmas stalls and recently a cake sale. The group has also purchased a charity collection box, to be placed in local shops in Hitchin which it is hoped will raise further funds. The group have recently contacted Hitchin Rotary for assistance and are awaiting a decision.

The group are organising a fundraising quiz night, in the summer and the Chair has applied to the Water Board for a grant and they are waiting on a response. The group are hoping to have a fundraising stall at the Walsworth Festival on 17th of May.

To date Early Days have not yet been able to use the grant received from the Hitchin Committee. However, they are keeping officers up to date on progress and receiving support and advice on their fundraising activities. All grants awarded are subject to a 24 month time limit. If the group have not used the funding for the prescribed purpose by June 2016 the funding may be reclaimed by the authority.

8.3.3 Hitchin Society

Hitchin Society received funding in June 2014 towards promotion and publicity for the Heritage Open days. However, they were unable to take part in the project in 2014 and the Hitchin Committee agreed that they could keep the funding to cover the costs of taking part in 2015. Confirmation has been received that the Hitchin Society will be taking part in organising Heritage Open Days this year and that funding will be spent on promotion and publicity as originally stated.

8.4 **Highways Matters**

It was agreed that a section entitled 'Highways Matters' is included within the Area Grant applications and community update Report for each committee cycle to facilitate debate and enable appropriate feedback on any of the proposed or listed schemes.

Any new proposals will be forwarded to the respective Herts County Councillor for consideration, who will in turn report back and advise the Committee accordingly.

9. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 The Terms of Reference in relation to Area Committees confirm that they may establish and maintain relationships with outside bodies/voluntary organisations which include discretionary grant support. However, this does not include grants for district wide activities.

- 9.2 Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 provides that the Council has power to do anything which it considers likely to promote or improve the economic, social or environmental well-being of its area. This would apply on the basis that financial assistance to voluntary and community organisations improves the economic, social or environmental well-being of the District or part of it.
- 9.3 Section 137 Local Government Act 1972 provides specific authority for the Council to incur expenditure on anything which is in the interests of and will bring direct benefit to its area. This includes a charity or other body operating for public service.
- 9.4 The Committee, as a body, has delegated powers to administer funds from the budgets described.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 In the past few years there has been no inflationary allowance to the main Area Committee Budget and the 2015/16 baseline budget has stayed the same as the previous year.
- 10.2 Appendix A provides the detailed budget end of year for 2014/15 position for the Committee.
Appendix B provides the details budget for 2015/16 position for the Committee.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 There are no relevant risk entries that have been recorded on Covalent, the Council's Performance & Risk system. Individual events should have their own risk assessments in place to mitigate any health and safety issues. There are no pertinent risk implications for the Authority associated with any items within this report.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 The Equality Act 2010 came into force on the 1st October 2010, a major piece of legislation. The Act also created a new Public Sector Equality Duty, which came into force on the 5th April 2011. There is a General duty, described in 12.2, that public bodies must meet, underpinned by more specific duties which are designed to help meet them.
- 12.2 In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of its functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 12.3 The projects which comprise the Community Officers' workload, and area committee funding assigned to community projects are assessed to ensure that they are as inclusive as possible to members of the local community. The only deviation to this is where a minority group may specifically receive funding or allocation of resources to address a particular area of need or 'gap' in provision.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 As the recommendations made in this report do not constitute a public service contract, the measurement of 'social value' as required by the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 need not be applied, although equalities implications and opportunities are identified in the relevant section at paragraphs 12.

14. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1 There are no pertinent Human Resource implications associated with any items within this report

15. APPENDICES

- 15.1 Appendix A Hitchin Area Committee Budget Report end of financial year 2014/15
- 15.2 Appendix B Hitchin Area Committee Budget Report for 2015/16
- 15.3 Appendix C Daisychains – Grant Report
- 15.4 Appendix D PHASE – Grant Report
- 15.5 Appendix E Area Committee Summary Update 2015 - 2016

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17. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 17.1 Review of Policies and Procedures for Financial Assistance to Voluntary and Community Organisations, November 2002.