

**HITCHIN COMMITTEE
8 SEPTEMBER 2015**

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

AGENDA ITEM No.

7

TITLE OF REPORT: GRANTS, GRANT APPLICATIONS & COMMUNITY UPDATE

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF POLICY & COMMUNITY SERVICES

PORTFOLIO HOLDER: COUNCILLOR TONY HUNTER

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 To advise the Committee on the current expenditure and balances of the Area Committee 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.

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
- 2.2 The Committee considers grant funding of £1,500, (being the maximum the officer is able to recommend) in principle for Clean Up Hitchin who are requesting £3,000 towards an initiative to deliver an anti-litter campaign which will challenge and change the attitudes of those individuals who drop litter in and around Hitchin(as outlined in 8.1.1 Appendix B),
- 2.3 The Committee considers grant funding of £1,400, to the African Caribbean Seniors and Carers Luncheon Club who are requesting grant funding to assist with the organising of an outing and events to celebrate Black History Month.(as outlined in 8.1.2 Appendix C)
- 2.4 The Committee considers grant funding of £500 to the Hertbreakers Netball Team towards the cost of court hire at Priory School and equipment (as outlined in 8.1.3 Appendix D)
- 2.5 The Committee considers grant funding of £1,500 (being the maximum the officer is able to recommend) for Hitchin Initiative who are requesting a grant funding contribution towards the cost of the town centre Christmas Lights.
(As outlined in 8.4 Appendix E)

- 2.6 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'.

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 RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 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 2015/16.
- 7.2 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.
- 7.3 The current level of unallocated funds within the Area Committee's 2015/16 Area Grant Budget is **£41,800**

7.4 The current level of unallocated funds Area Committee's 2014/15 Area Grant Budget is **£22,972**.

This figure takes into account all of the amounts that were previously allocated to generic headings. Due to the recent decision by Cabinet to allow area committee funds to be carried forward (with the agreement of Council) any amounts allocated to a generic heading have now been transferred on the budget sheet to be shown as unallocated in order to show more clearly the amount of funds available for projects and grant funding.

8. PROJECT/ ACTIVITY/ SCHEME DETAILS

8.1 Grant Applications

8.1.1 Clean Up Hitchin

'Clean Up' Hitchin are requesting £3,000 towards an initiative to deliver an anti-litter campaign which will challenge and change the attitudes of those individuals who drop litter in and around Hitchin. Outlined below is the project plan which demonstrates the actions and costs incurred in the launch of the project.

What	Where	Duration	Estimated Cost
Campaign banners	Top & bottom of Hermitage Rd	@ hard launch for 4 weeks	£150
Binstallations'	St Mary's Garden	@ hard launch for 4 weeks	£150
Shop window vinyl stickers	c. 250 Hitchin stores	Unlimited from soft launch	£150
Permanent metal signs @ litter hotspots	4 x Windmill Hill, 2 x Ransoms Rec, 2 x Butts Close, 2 x St Mary's Gardens	Permanent timing TBC	£2000
Posters for ad-hoc distribution	Community Centres, Community Notice Boards, Halls, Churches, Family, Schools etc	Unlimited from soft launch	£80
Reverse graffiti	Suitable surfaces in and around the town centre	@ hard launch until they wear off (up to 5 months)	£700
Primary school resources	All primary schools in Hitchin	From Spring Term 2016	£200
Top Secret Project	By surprise!	Sporadically...	£100

The elements in red will be prioritised as they are believed to provide the greatest impact for the investment. The Top Secret Project is the remote control bin which is being built by Hitchin Hackspace, and is seen as a key tool for driving awareness and encouraging the spread of the message on social media. It is hoped that this process will appeal to audiences who may be otherwise hard to reach.

'Clean Up Hitchin' consider that there are many benefits of reducing the amount of litter on the streets and open spaces in Hitchin, as follows:

- The environment – land and waterways become less polluted
- Happiness in the community – litter makes ashamed of where they live.
- Health and Wellbeing – Hitchin has a problem with vermin which maybe exacerbated by high levels of litter.
- The Broken Window Theory – more research is pointing to a correlation between rising levels of litter and graffiti, anti-social behaviour and low-level crime
- The wildlife – less risk to animals, domestic and wild from ingesting / becoming trapped by or choking on litter.

Hitchin BID have agreed to provide £500 towards the project and the remainder is being requested from Hitchin Area Committee budgets. Representatives from Clean Up Hitchin are closely working with officers from both Grounds Maintenance and planning with regard to their proposals regarding signage on council land and the reverse graffiti parts of the project.

The group realise that they may be limited on the permanent signage due to the high costs attached. Following research on signage undertaken by Clean Up Britain it appears that such signs are far more effective if the areas highlighted are generally well maintained (graffiti quickly removed, benches well maintained, litter bins smart and clean and not off-putting to use).

The group are also working in partnership with other local community groups such as Hitchin Forum, Hackspace and local Schools.

Officers, councillors and representatives of Clean Up Hitchin are due to meet, but due to holiday and other commitments, this meeting could only be scheduled to take place following this meeting of the Hitchin Area Committee. Members are therefore requested to consider the application on its merits at this point and should they be minded, to award any grant 'in principle' at this committee, so that the project as thereafter agreed should be able to progress without further delay.

(As outlined in recommendation 2.2, Appendix B)

8.1.2 African Caribbean Seniors & Carers Lunch Club

The African Caribbean Seniors & Carers Lunch Club meets each Friday at Bancroft Hall providing social activities, lunch, seated exercise, arts & crafts and outings for older people and carers from the African and Caribbean community. The club are aware of the plan to demolish Bancroft hall at the end of 2015 and are currently researching alternative venues for next year.

They are requesting £1,400 towards the cost of activities to celebrate Black History Month in October. They are planning a day trip for up to 50 of their members, carers and friends and family to Southend. In addition they will be hosting an open day to invite the wider community to the club in order to promote community cohesion, raise the profile of the club and help to fundraise towards their ongoing running costs. They will be making arts and crafts items to sell at the open day and also plan to hire a stall in Hitchin Market Place again to raise the profile of the club and raise funds.

They aim to use funding to cover the cost of coach hire for their daytrip, hire of wheelchairs for those members with mobility problems, to cover the cost of printing posters and leaflets to promote the open day and to purchase arts and craft resources.

(As outlined in recommendation 2.3, Appendix C)

8.1.3 Hertbreakers Netball Club

The Hertbreakers Netball Club are based at Priory School and are requesting £1,000 towards court hire. equipment and the cost of putting two people through the UKCC Level 1 coaching course.

In addition to encouraging young women to continue to stay active after they leave school, they hope to encourage more male players and set up a mens team. Being able to book more court time the team may open up greater participation, including male players and those with disabilities. If they are successful in gaining grant funding they are hoping to hold training sessions and attend courses in order to coach and encourage those with disabilities to play start playing netball.

It is hoped to use contacts at England Netball to assist in attracting new male players with those with a disability.

(As outlined in recommendation 2.4, Appendix D)

8.1.4 Hitchin Initiative (HI)

Hitchin Initiative are requesting that Councillors consider a grant funding contribution towards the cost of upgrading the town centre Christmas Lights.

This grant would be compliant with the Authorities' strategic objectives of working with local communities and protecting the environment. However, members should be aware that NHDC previously took a decision under corporate business planning, not to fund town centre enhancements such as hanging baskets; furthermore in 2010/11 a decision was made to gradually withdraw funding from town centre partnerships in order to ensure they would become self sustaining. Hitchin Initiative, having been established the longest was first to have its funding gradually withdrawn and then cease, as will the remaining three in the district in coming years. As these are agreed policy decisions of the authority, it would not be appropriate to award any grant in these respects, but the use for enhancing Christmas lights would not be contrary to Council policy and could be supported.

Outlined in the table below are the list of projects that HI are currently fundraising for and the costings supplied by the Town Centre Manager.

Project	Required Expenditure	Income / Support Received
Christmas Lights Cost per annum for the next 4 years	£34, 500	£19,200 from Hitchin BID.
Planting including hanging baskets and troughs	£10,600	£10,600 from Hitchin BID / HI
Bunting for new bunting + put up & takedown	£1,500	£1,500 from HI
Cabbies Hut For restoration and refurb.	£3,288	£3,288 from public appeal + HI.
H Samuel Clock For restoration & refurb. Not including re-installation.	£2,212	None identified as yet.
Recycling Bins	£13,000	Circa £9000 identified from NHDC central waste budget, balance to be raised.
TOTAL	£65,100	£43,588

The total costs of these projects are in the region of £65,100 and HI are constantly engaged in fundraising activities in order to cover the costs. These include fundraising events, local business sponsorship and contributions from the Hitchin Business Improvement District Company (of which, NHDC is of course a member, paying the relevant levy on its assets within the prescribed BID boundary). So far £43,588 has been raised towards the projects. This leaves a shortfall in funding of £21,512. Members should also take into consideration the 'in-kind' contribution that the Authority provides to the BID by means of administration of the BID levy.
(As outlined in recommendation 2.5 Appendix E)

8.2 Update on previous grants awarded

8.2.1 Home-start Grant awarded in July 2015

Home-start have held their family fun day fund raising in Hitchin Market Square. Despite the wet weather they managed to raise £465 on the day and raised the profile of the organisation by engaging with the local community at the event and coverage in the local press.

Many of the resources purchased for the event will be reused and they are planning a similar event in the run up to Christmas.

In addition Home-start took 34 families on a day trip to Standalone Farm. Area Committee funding covered the cost of transport and entry fees and they gained additional funding from the Rotary club which paid for a picnic. The outing was very successful and benefitted from great weather on the day.

8.2.2 Park Run Grant Allocated in September 2014

£1500 was allocated to Parkrun Hitchin towards the start up costs of this national scheme to encourage the local community to join in with running initiatives at all levels. Organisers hoped to use Walsworth Common as a central green open space. However, their application for a land licence for the use of the Council managed area of Walsworth Common has been rejected on the basis that such regular and heavy use of the space would detrimentally effect the natural environment. The Communities officer remains in contact with the Parkrun organiser and has been informed that they are actively seeking an alternative venue, however this may result in the Parkrun operating from a different area within the district.

8.2.3 North Herts Centre for Voluntary Services (NHCVS) - Furniture Link

£363 grant funding was provided by Hitchin Area Committee in September 2014 as a percentage contribution across the five District Area Committees, towards the cost of the purchase of a new van for Furniture Link.

As the project covered the whole of the district each area committee was requested to provide a contribution. Approximately 50% of the users of the service are based in Letchworth, therefore a contribution of £1450 was provided from within the Letchworth Committee budget. The remaining 50% was divided in four between, Hitchin, Baldock & District, Royston and Southern Rural Committees who all agreed to contribute £363.

The new Furniture Link van was put into service at the beginning of December. Staff at Furniture Link have stated "It has been lovely to have a reliable vehicle to use especially during the winter months and it has made planning collections and donations easier for both customers and Furniture Link staff".

The new logo and clearer contact details mean that they have a regular presence on the roads in North Herts as they deliver and collect. The first six months of the year have been profitable with their weekly sales target of £1000 being met. Furniture Link has saved approximately 20 tonnes from landfill from January to July 2015. The van has been used to deliver almost all of the 816 items sold during the period as well as collect the 1146 donated during the same time period. Without a new van, Furniture Link could not have reliably and regularly achieved this.

8.3 Hitchin Committee Project monitoring chart

At the request of the Chairman of the Hitchin Area Committee and in order for the Committee to monitor progress on projects and issues an appendix has been included for information which outlines each issue / project and lists the previous update and the current update and the department responsible.

(As outlined in Appendix F)

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 aid/financial support. The Committee has delegated powers, as a body, to administer funds from the budgets described. However, this does not include grants for district wide activities.

9.2 Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 provides a General Power of Competence which gives local authorities the power to do anything that individuals generally may do for the benefit of the authority, its area or persons resident in its area.

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

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 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 for 2015/16
- 15.2 Appendix B Clean Up Hitchin – Grant Report
- 15.3 Appendix C African, Caribbean Seniors & Carers Luncheon Club – Grant Report
- 15.4 Appendix D Hertbreakers Netball Team - Grant Report
- 15.5 Appendix E Hitchin Town Centre Initiative – Grant Report
- 15.6 Appendix F Hitchin Committee Monitoring Chart

16. CONTACT OFFICERS

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17. BACKGROUND PAPERS

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