

**HITCHIN COMMITTEE**  
**24th MAY 2016**

**\*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 Ward Budgets as set out in Appendix A(i) end position 2015/16 and Appendix A(ii) budget for 2016/17.
- 2.2 The Committee considers the request for grant funding of **£2,700** from Hitchin Counselling Service towards administrative costs (as outlined in 8.1.1, Appendix B). The maximum amount the officer is able to recommend is £1,500 under the agreed Criteria.
- 2.3 The Committee considers the request for grant funding of **£4,147** from North Herts Citizens Advice Bureau towards relocation costs to a new Letchworth Office (as outlined in 8.1.2, Appendix C). The maximum amount the officer is able to recommend is £1,500 under the agreed Criteria.
- 2.4 The Committee considers the request for grant funding of **£2,706** from Herts Young Carers for support for 10 young carers attending from Hitchin. (as outlined in 8.1.3, Appendix D). The maximum amount the officer is able to recommend is £1,500 under the agreed Criteria.
- 2.5 The Committee considers the provision of grant funding **£750** to North Herts Minority Ethnic Forum towards a Summer programme for disadvantaged children (as outlined in 8.1.4, Appendix E)

- 2.6 The Committee considers the reallocation of the following amounts totalling **£688** to the base budget.  
The following items have been identified as amounts remaining following the completion of a project:
- Bollards at Tilehouse Street                      £351
  - Westmill Brochure                                      £90
  - Post in Burford Way                                    £227
  - Friends of Walsworth Common                      £20
- 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'.

### **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 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 end 2015/16, and Appendix B new budgets for 2016/17.
- 7.2 The spreadsheet also details pre-allocated sums carried forward from the previous financial years, including balances and past expenditure relating to the allocated and unallocated Area Capital Visioning Budgets available to the Committee.
- 7.3 The current level of unallocated funds carried over from the Area Committee's 2015/16 Area Grant Budget is £14,702 as outlined in Appendix A (i). The development budget for 2016/17 is £19,600 as outlined in Appendix A (ii). This equates to a total of **£34,202**. If distributed evenly between the 4 meetings in the civic year this would provide £8,575 budget available per meeting.

## 8. PROJECT/ ACTIVITY/ SCHEME DETAILS

### 8.1 Grant Applications

#### 8.1.1 Hitchin Counselling Service

Hitchin Counselling Service (HCS) are based in Bedford Road Health Centre and provide free, professional long-term counselling to residents aged over 18 living in Hitchin and surrounding villages.

HCS are requesting **£2,700** towards the administrative costs in order to ensure the continuation of the service for 12 months from September 2016 when funding received from Big Lottery Fund will cease. They currently have no other funders, and are reliant on voluntary donations.

The service has been in existence since 1993 and operates evenings Monday to Friday.

The Counsellors provide their services free of charge and the Health Service provide the venue at no cost.

Annual running costs are approximately £3,400 per annum, the largest costs incurred is for two training events per year (£2,000), the rest is made up of administrative costs such as Insurance, subscription to professional body (BACP), postage, phone, printing, website. HCS have raised £400 towards this from donations.

Hitchin Committee provided £1,000 funding to the organisation in 2007.

(As outlined in recommendation 2.2, Appendix B)

#### 8.1.2 Citizens Advice North Herts

Citizens Advice North Hertfordshire (CANH) is an independent local charity providing a free, confidential information and advice service. They provide the advice people need for the problems they face, and improve the policies and practices that affect people's lives. They rely heavily on volunteers and are equipped to respond to any issue, covering areas including benefits, debt, employment and housing amongst many others. Their advice is delivered face-to-face from 12 outlets, including housing offices, community centres, county courts, food banks, as well as via telephone, email and access to reliable online information.

This grant application was brought to the Letchworth Councillors in March and grant funding of £8,415 has been provided from their discretionary budgets. On the recommendation of members and on the basis that the service covers all of the district, the remaining £11,585 is now being sought from the remaining four Area Committees and divided by per capita percentage.

They are therefore seeking a contribution of **£4,147** from the Hitchin Committee towards the fit out of a new head office in Letchworth following a move to new premises. The relocation is required as they need more space and a secure long-term home. The current Letchworth office has a tiny waiting room, not enough interview rooms, no training room and nowhere near enough desk space for staff and volunteers. The current rent is £18,000 per year and the landlord wants to raise it to £25,000. The current 3 year lease ends in June 2016. The new premises in 49 Station Road is owned by the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation and offers much better value for money with approximately twice the floor area for £19,800 per year on a 15 year lease. It will enable an increase from 3 to 5 interview rooms to see more clients face-to-face clients, double the Advice line phone capacity, and train more volunteers. More efficient hot-desking is planned in order to maximise use of office space. Demand from clients has risen by 30% over the past two years, and volunteer numbers have risen over 10% over the past 6 months. They aim to double the number of advice calls handled to 2,000 per year, dramatically increase the amount of financial capability training offered to reduce debt issues, and expand the provision of energy advice to relieve fuel poverty and improve energy efficiency. They now have a member of staff trained to undertake thermal imaging to inform residents where energy efficiency improvements could be most effective. It will enable them to continue their core work to support the most vulnerable people across North Hertfordshire with benefits, debt, housing, employment and family issues.

The new premises contains the last remaining original Parker and Unwin shop front in Letchworth, and the Heritage Foundation has agreed to pay for an external refurbishment and internal strip out of the building, to include new heritage windows and restoration of the original shop front. The CANH will pay for the creation of four new interview rooms, flooring, lighting, power and data, additional desks, chairs and telephones, security alarm, an accessible toilet, as well as upgrades to kitchen, toilets, heating and ventilation systems.

CANH are seeking grant funding of £20,000 from North Hertfordshire District Council towards the cost of the fixtures and fittings for the new premises.

The Letchworth head office is open for drop-in five mornings a week and appointments in the afternoons. The new premises will have a much bigger waiting room, 5 interview rooms instead of 3 and a dedicated training and Adviceline room as well as more office space generally. This will make it possible to recruit more volunteers, see more clients, answer more calls, and offer more preventative work such as financial capability training to reduce debt issues, and energy advice to reduce fuel poverty and improve energy efficiency. It will also assist the organisation by providing a secure foundation on which they can build to diversify the funding for the future.

In 2015, Citizens Advice North Herts supported almost 5,400 individual clients with over 11,000 issues (up from 4,500 with 10,000 issues in 2014/15). 26% of clients are resident in Hitchin. The Citizens Advice Hitchin office is open 2 days per week for drop-ins and appointments. The digital advice screen in North Herts College's new Hitchin campus is well used and allows students to access the information they need, enabling Citizens Advice to manage the increasing demands on their service. Many residents from this area also use the main office in Letchworth which is open 5 days a week or call for telephone advice. The demand for telephone advice in North Herts is high, particularly from rural residents, disabled, carers, the housebound and the working population. The move to new premises in Station Road will enable the organisation to meet growing demand for both face-to-face and telephone services as well as provide training for volunteers from across the district.

Benefits for clients from Hitchin in 2015 included over £330,000 in financial outcomes generated. Broken down by ward this equated to £138,000 for Hitchin Oughton residents, £71,000 for Hitchin Bearton, £70,000 for Hitchin Walsworth, £46,000 for Hitchin Highbury, and £3,000 for Hitchin Priory. Most of this relates to securing disability benefits for those who need this support. These benefits make a huge difference to quality of life, and reduce the demand on health, statutory and other voluntary sector services. While national success rates for Disability Living Allowance applications are 60%, the specialist caseworkers and highly trained volunteers have a near 100% success rate.

A comparison of Hitchin area issues in 2015 relative to the average for North Herts show that overall benefit, housing and employment issues are in line with district averages at 34%, 16% and 13% respectively of the top 5 issues. Debt issues are higher than average in Hitchin at 28% of the top 5 issues compared with 24% across North Herts. Relationship and family issues are lower than average at 9% compared to 14% across the district. Where there were debt issues in the area, almost half (48%) related to rent arrears with housing associations, higher than the district average of 35%. In terms of housing, issues with private rented sector housing were more prominent in this area at 32% compared to 27% across the district. Similarly issues with housing association property were also higher at 26% compared to 17% in North Herts, although threatened homelessness was lower at 19% in the Hitchin area compared to the district average of 35% (of the top 5 housing issues).

Members should be aware that, North Hertfordshire District Council currently provides the CANH with a three yearly Memorandum of Understanding of £145,430 towards the annual running costs, in addition a further £25,000 annually towards the cost of a court worker in order to best reduce incidence of homelessness. There are also in-kind contributions in terms of rate relief of approximately £20,000 on three premises in Letchworth, Hitchin and Royston. Also rent subsidies, in-kind contribution of maintenance on the NHDC premises at Thomas Bellamy House in Hitchin and Royston Town Hall Annex, as outlined below:

#### Level of Subsidised Rents

Thomas Bellamy House & Royston Town Hall Annex £6,000 per site

Service Charges (In Kind)

Thomas Bellamy House £4,482 & Royston Town Hall Annex £8,804

Comparison with other Hertfordshire authorities has demonstrated a continuing desire by the majority of authorities to maintain adequate funding for CAB advice services, albeit the amounts vary considerably from authority to authority. The population statistics also give a very approximate indication of potential level of demand for the services provided, but much will depend on levels of deprivation, priority areas for the individual authority i.e. homelessness, levels of debt etc.

For 2014/15, figures were

District / Borough	Population	Funding provided to CAB	Other info
North Herts	131,000	£145,430	plus <i>(as stated above)</i>
Broxbourne	95,700	£144,000	plus £39k for specialist (housing) court worker
Stevenage	86,000	£170,000	
East Herts	143,000	£129,000	(13/14 figures)
Hertsmere	102,400	£215,000	
Dacorum	149,700	£172,000	
Welwyn Hatfield	116,000	£80,750	
Watford	95,500	£243,692	
Three Rivers	90,400	£297,340	

The above table may be of assistance to Members in order to set the local figures into a County-wide context. In discussions between senior officers the CANH board of trustees, the CANH were reluctant to consider any arrangement with NHDC to use a floor of the Council Offices for their operations as they preferred to maintain a visible 'independence' from the council for their clients (albeit such arrangements exist at authorities such as St Albans). Consequently this course of action would not have proved practical, as the timescale for the completion of the newly refurbished Council Offices would be too late for the relocation of the CANH due to the lease at their current premises ceasing prior to this date.

(As outlined in recommendation 2.3, Appendix C)

### 8.1.3 Herts Young Carers

Herts Young Carers (HYC) meets fortnightly at Nightingale Day Centre, Hitchin to give emotional and practical support to young carers through recreational activities. Three different themed activities per session: sports / exercise activity, a cookery activity and an arts and crafts 'project'. They provide the young carers with respite and peer support in a safe and fun environment.

Young carers are children and young people who look after someone in their family who has an illness, a disability, or is affected by mental ill-health or substance misuse. Young carers often take on practical and/or emotional caring responsibilities that would normally be expected of an adult. The tasks undertaken can vary according to the nature of the illness or disability, the level and frequency of need for care and the structure of the family as a whole.

A young carer may do some or all of the following:

- Practical tasks, such as cooking, housework and shopping.
- Physical care, such as lifting, helping a parent on stairs or with physiotherapy.
- Personal care, such as dressing, washing, helping with toileting needs.
- Managing the family budget, collecting benefits and prescriptions.
- Administering medication.
- Looking after or "parenting" younger siblings.
- Emotional support.
- Interpreting, due to a hearing or speech impairment or because English is not the family's first language.

Some young carers may undertake high levels of care, whereas for others it may be frequent low levels of care. Either can impact heavily on a child or young person. Carers often suffer ill-health due to their caring role, sometimes physical or psychological. All young carers need support to be able to juggle their education and caring roles.

Herts Young Carers supports young carers in practical and emotional ways. They provide regular respite and peer support. The children and young people are also able to genuinely 'act their age' at the Young Carers sessions and feel safe in a fun environment.

The Group are expecting to grow in order to support as many young carers as possible. All the volunteers but one are in full-time employment: many were themselves young carers and can therefore fully appreciate the support that a Group like this can bring to the children and young people.

HYC require funding towards the cost of craft equipment, volunteer training, volunteer out-of-pocket expenses, running costs, transportation of the children and young people by taxi and occasional outings.

The group was set up in May 2013; over the past 3 years the focus has been on keeping the Group going, making it fully compliant by creating a raft of Safeguarding policy documents, training the volunteers, fundraising and also on maintaining the Group as a place that the young carers want to come to.

HYC currently have 24 young carers attending Group and a waiting list. Following a volunteer recruitment programme in November 2015 they have brought on board a high quality management committee, in addition to 9 volunteers at each session and 9 trustees. The organisation is now in a position to 'take things to the next level' and become fully sustainable for the future. They aim to become a registered Charity this year. They are now in a strong position with stable management and a more strategic approach to funding.

The operational costs have increased significantly over the past few years as the number of Young Carers attending has increased. These costs will further increase with the expected expansion of the group and the recruitment of additional volunteers.

Grant funding is requested towards equipment, materials, volunteer training and expenses, operational costs, promotion and marketing, transport and trips.

Training of volunteers is necessary for Compliance. Volunteers undertake training in: First Aid, Safeguarding Children, Food and Hygiene, Health and Safety. There is a significant list of advisory training for safe running the Group. New volunteers require DBS checking and Safeguarding training as a minimum.

The group are planning for a basic Wordpress website to be developed and intend to get business cards and leaflets printed in order to promote the service to the widest audience.

Being a young carer is often about physical and emotional responsibilities. This can result in social isolation and being unable to access local activities. Therefore, outings and trips provide an opportunity for them to be themselves and have some fun with friends. When asked about outings, the young carers chose a trip to Bounce (Trampoline Park) in Milton Keynes. In addition, the Christmas trip to Hollywood Bowl and then Pizza Hut in Stevenage has now become a regular, much enjoyed, festive event.

The highest cost incurred is for transport of the young carers by taxi to the sessions. Their parents are not in a position to bring them to the sessions and a shared taxi with other group-members is the solution to enable them to attend. These costs rise significantly as the Group grows.

HYC have been successful in gaining funding from local organisations that have provided some funding for trips and outings. They have good relations with various community organisations in Hitchin and are hopeful that the Round Table and Rotary will provide support for another outing. The group continually fundraise via a range of activities including Waitrose Community Matters Charity Donation, fundraising bake sales and quiz nights.

The operational costs per annum are £9,820 for an expected number of 25 young carers. This equates to an annual cost of £392.80 per young carer. As 8 of the young people are based in Stevenage, the Borough Council has provided £3,650 towards the operating costs.

The group are requesting a total of £4,600 from NHDC (to be split between 3 Area Committees which currently have young carers attending). This equates to £270.58 x 17 young carers in the relevant areas. The group are requesting **£2,706** to cover the cost of 10 young people who attend from Hitchin. Herts Young Carers are committed to raise the balance of approximately £3,000.

(As outlined in recommendation 2.4, Appendix D)

#### 8.1.4 North Herts Minority Ethnic Forum

North Herts Minority Ethnic Forum (NHMEF) is an umbrella organisation set up to provide access to a variety of services, guidance and advice aimed at the black and minority ethnic communities (BME) in North Herts.

NHMEF are planning to provide summer holiday activities for 75 children from both Hitchin and Letchworth. This grant application will be split between the two area Committees.

The two week programme will include:

- Fire fit boot camp – covering Healthy Eating, Tackling Obesity, Road Safety, Fire Safety, Handling emergency situations and dialling 999.
- Multi-sports programme
- Arts and Crafts
- Health workshops with East of England Ambulance Service.

The service will give the young people opportunity to engage with positive activities during the long summer school break when many families can't afford to go on holiday resulting in the children becoming bored and possibly becoming involved in anti-social behaviour.

Most of the families involved are disadvantaged and would be unable to fund such activities themselves.

NHMEF are requesting £1,250 from NHDC to cover the cost of the coaching fees of the boot camp, a one week programme provided by a company set up by fire service personnel called Ladder87.

This amount will be divided between Hitchin and Letchworth Committees.

There will be 45 children attending who are resident in Hitchin and **£750** is requested from the Hitchin development budget.

There will be 30 children attending living in Letchworth, and that Area Committee will be requested to consider funding of £500.

Families will pay £10.00 per child for the two week program, and this income will cover the cost of the Sports Coaches, Arts and Craft tutors and refreshments.



Members are reminded that the North Herts Minority Ethnic Forum currently receives annual funding of £10,500 under a Memorandum of Understanding agreement.

The NHMEF accounts show that in financial year 2014/15 they earned £80,338, of which £78,363 covers the costs of wages, rent and general running costs. They currently have balances amounting to £22,341 as of 1<sup>st</sup> May 2016, and some restricted funds (balances) relating to previous Lottery or similar funding.

(As outlined in recommendation 2.5, Appendix E)

## **8.2 Highways Matters**

It was agreed that a section entitled 'Highways Matters' be 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, and they 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 but excluding grants for district-wide activities. The Committee has delegated powers, as a body, to allocate discretionary budgets and devolved budgets within the terms determined by the Council.

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. This may be for, or otherwise than 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 Appendix A (i) provides the detailed budget end of year for 2015/16 position for the Committee. Appendix A (ii) provides the detailed budget for 2016/17 representing a reduction of 55% from the previous financial year in addition a carry forward unallocated amount of £14,702 from 2015/16

## **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 1<sup>st</sup> October 2010, a major piece of legislation. The Act also created a new Public Sector Equality Duty, which came into force on the 5<sup>th</sup> 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 their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, 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  
(i) Hitchin Area Committee Year End Position Budget Reports for 2015/16  
(ii) Hitchin Area Committee Budget Report 2016/17
- 15.2 Appendix B Hitchin Counselling Service - Grant Report
- 15.3 Appendix C Citizens Advice North Herts - Grant Report
- 15.4 Appendix D Herts Young Carers - Grant Report
- 15.5 Appendix E North Herts Minority Ethnic Forum - Grant Report

## **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.