

LETCHWORTH COMMITTEE
10 JUNE 2015

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

AGENDA ITEM No.

10

TITLE OF REPORT: GRANTS, GRANT APPLICATIONS AND 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 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 Budget and Visioning Budget as set out in Appendix 1 and 2.
- 2.2 That the Committee notes and agrees the deduction of £1,300 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 later in 2015
- 2.3 That the Committee considers the application for grant funding of £1,500 (being the maximum amount that the Officer can recommend) to Howard Garden Social Centre, as outlined in 8.2.2, appendix 3.
- 2.4 That the committee considers grant funding of £430 to the Yvonne Savage Club for Partially Sighted as outlined in 8.2.3 appendix 4.

- 2.5 That the Committee considers grant funding of £1,000 to the Wednesday Drop-In Club as outlined in 8.2.4, appendix 5.
- 2.6 That the Committee considers grant funding of £1500 (being the largest amount the officer is able to recommend) to Letchworth Town Centre Partnership towards the cost of the Winter Festival including the Christmas Light Switch On in November as outlined below in 8.3 appendix 6, but also noting officer advice in regard to agreed Council policy, also at paragraph 8.3.
- 2.7 That the Committee considers grant funding of £1,000 to Jackie's Drop In towards the cost of hiring a stage and sound system for their family fun day event as outlined in 8.4, appendix 7.
- 2.8 That the Committee considers grant funding of £1,000 the Royal British Legion (Letchworth Branch) towards the cost of the Armed Forces Day event, as outlined in 8.5, appendix 8.
- 2.9 That the Committee considers funding in relation to any potential Highways schemes, as discussed under section 8.7 of this report and discuss the proposal put forward at the meeting held on Wednesday 3 December 2014, and as advised by officers in terms of the Council's budget policy.
- 2.10 That the Committee endorses the actions taken by the Community Officer to promote greater community capacity and well-being for Letchworth Garden City.

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 and the guidance in the 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 of 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 raised 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 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 1 Area Committee Budget Spread sheet, which relates to the Area Committee budget balances for the end of the financial year 2014/15 and Appendix 2 containing the budget balances for the current financial year 2015/16.
- 7.2 The spread sheet also details pre-allocated sums carried forward from the previous financial year 2013/14 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 2014/15 Area Grant Budget is **£41,300**.
- 7.4 There is **£5,678** funds carried forward from within the Area Committee's 2013/14 Area Grant Budget that £220 has been allocated towards the cost of producing a leaflet for Councillors Surgeries.
- 7.5 The Area Committee's Capital Visioning Grant Budget of £5,000 is now fully allocated to Jackmans Community Association.
- 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.

- 7.7 In a number of grant applications from Parish Councils within this report, there is a general reminder that these are precepting authorities, and thus have the ability, and in some instances retain a *statutory duty* to carry out activities for which they are also asking NHDC to fund. North Hertfordshire District Council's existing budget policy is not to finance work for which other statutory agencies are responsible and are provided with funding to deliver, or for which another agency retains the statutory duty to provide. In the case of Parish Councils, there remains the ability to consider raising their precept to fund key projects; the same flexibility does not exist for district councils in regard to raising additional funding through Council Tax, since they are subject to capping or conduct of referendum to determine any rise.

Members may therefore wish to consider the following grant applications in terms of the parish's frequency of application, previous awards made and the parish contribution toward the overall scheme. This existing budget policy will form part of the grants review process, currently underway.

8. PROJECT/ ACTIVITY/ SCHEME DETAILS

8.1 Former Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) grant recipients

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) grants were originally allocated for a period of three years by the Letchworth 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, any larger awards would now need to be treated as contractual arrangements, and for minor MoUs, as previously awarded by area committees there needs to be either a way of funding ongoing projects to ensure greater visibility of the award itself, to provide an audit trail, and meet equalities requirements.

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. An update on the status of Memoranda of Understanding and amounts paid to the Council's districtwide providers was published in the Members Information Service bulletin in early April.

Members are therefore requested at this meeting to consider how to allocate **for one year only** the MoU amount as awarded in 2014/15, which has rolled forward into this year's area 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.

- 8.2 In 2012, seven local organisations received MoU grant funding from the Letchworth 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. One organisation is no longer operational and the Letchworth Art Centre is now operating as part of the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation's charitable portfolio. The remaining organisations presented at the meeting held in March where they were requested to outline their funding requirements for the 2015/16 financial year in order to apply via the general Community Grant process; members are requested to consider each option in turn, informed by officer advice and supporting documentation from each organisation by way of 'grant application'..

8.2.1 Letchworth Town Twinning Association

Following their application for grant funding at the meeting on 11 March 2015, the group have received £480 from Area Committee Budgets towards the cost of hosting a visit from the Twin Town of Chagny from 14 to 18 May this year.

8.2.2 Howard Garden Social Centre

Following the presentation given at the meeting on 11th March the Committee were informed of the necessity and importance of the services provided to older people in Letchworth at the Centre. They have approximately 200 members regularly using the centre which operates a range of activities aimed to encourage health, wellbeing and combat loneliness and social isolation. Operational costs equate to £65,000 per year, most of which is covered by County Council contracts, income from hall hire and other fundraising activities. The Centre's original MoU agreement provided them with £6,000 per year towards running costs but this amount has been decreasing year on year. They are requesting £5,000 grant funding for the 2015/16 financial year.

The grant report for this project is outlined in Appendix 3 Members are advised that under the Council's procurement regulations, any award of £5,000 or more should generally be treated as a contractual arrangement, be included on the Council's contract register and managed accordingly. This should include statistics in regard to groups engaged within the activities, measurement of benefits etc, but given the group provide such analysis for HCC commissioning purposes, this should not be onerous or require additional effort since the same information can be used for both.

8.2.3 Yvonne Savage Club for Partially Sighted

Following the presentation given at the meeting on 1th March 2015 by Mr Jeff Foster, Chairman, and Mr Rodney Bywaters Treasurer, the Yvonne Savage Club for Partially Sighted would like to request £430 grant funding towards the cost of hiring the venue.

- The Club has been in existence for 70 years ;
- People have to be registered blind to join;
- The Club has 23 members and 13 volunteers;
- Monthly meetings are held at the Central Methodist Church which a two course hot meal is served and there is entertainment;
- During the summer a trip out is organised, which has previously been funded by Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation;
- For some members this is the main trip out of their house;
- The Club provides a vital community service;
- An annual subscription of £5 and a small amount for the meal is charged;
- Hall hire costs are £853 per year;
- Grant funding by Letchworth Committee was originally granted when the Club moved from Brotherhood Hall.

The grant report for this project is outlined in Appendix 5

8.2.4 Wednesday Drop In Club

The club has been running for the past 25 years and was originally supported via the Herts Partnership NHS Trust for Mental Health. They meet at the Central Methodist Church Hall providing a drop in social interaction for people with long term mental health problems and learning disabilities. The Church provides subsidised room hire for the club and a mini-bus is owned in partnership between the Club and the Church. A volunteer driver provides Club members with transport to and from the Club for which they make a small donation towards the running costs of the mini-bus.

The Club has reduced the room hire hours and cut back on trips out in order to operate within their means. However, they have ended the last financial year with a deficit of £1,275 as grant funding has reduced over the past few years. They have been receiving an MoU of £500 with reductions each year. The Wednesday Drop in would like to request grant funding of £1,000 towards the operational costs for the 2015/16 financial year.

The grant report for this project is outlined in Appendix 4

8.3 **Letchworth Town Centre Events**

The Letchworth Town Centre Partnership (LTCP) is requesting £2,500 of funding towards the Christmas programme, which includes the Christmas Lights Switch-On event – 21st November. Funding will enable the creation of strong marketing outreach campaigns for all events that will help build a sense of anticipation and capture people's imaginations both locally and regionally and drive people to the town.

The Christmas programme has proven very popular in the past and the LTCP are continuing to drive improvements and value for money.

For Christmas LTCP will continue to expand the theme introduced last year, which was the Letchworth Garden City Winter Festival. The event, which ran for the whole day boasted the highest footfall of any Christmas event and the addition of the Land Train proved to be extremely popular. This year the extra sponsorship that it is hoped to attract will improve the marketing reach, with the objective being to become self-sustaining. However, this is expected to take another 2-3 years.

The event will have a significant online presence through websites and social media channels as well as traditional print media. The event will have a marketing campaign that ensures that people will know specific event timings, locations and details through free brochures, paid for advertising in local and regional press, window and display posters, and promotional banners.

Retailers benefit from the increased footfall and dwell time that town centre events generate with many reporting new customers through their doors and increased sales at key events in 2014. Footfall counters showed that shopper and visitor numbers increase on days where free events are being held. Strong marketing outreach campaigns these events should help reposition Letchworth as a vibrant lively town within the region benefitting not just the town centre but residents and visitors alike. LTCP are focusing heavily on both the Food and Garden Festival and the Winter Festival with the view of turning them into major destinations to also bring in external footfall. Christmas 2014 proved this effort to work in that the town had footfall from as far away as France coming specifically for the event as well as from other counties in the UK.

The events attract significant PR and resident engagement. NHDC will be clearly identified as one of the key events sponsors and subsequently this will demonstrate to the public NHDC's commitment to the town's wellbeing and working in partnership for the betterment of the town. The events are unique in being large scale, completely free for participants and open to all to enjoy.

(The grant report for this project is outlined in Appendix 6)

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). For Letchworth, the sum paid for financial year 2015/16 is £6,875, that sum reducing gradually each year from the original £27,500 until it finishes at the start of the Financial Year 2016/17

The Council is also a significant contributor to the BID process, providing officer resource in the assessment and collection of the levies, but also, for Letchworth, a levy in the amount of £5,114 per annum on its assets within the BID area.

8.4 **Jackie's Drop In**

Jackie's Drop In Centre provide low cost services to support those with learning disabilities currently based at St Michaels House on Norton Way South. It is run entirely by volunteers who are organising a community funday to take place around the building including the car park to the rear located on Openshaw Way. The event aims to raise much needed funding towards running the centre and promote community cohesion and raise awareness of the general public of those with different needs and learning disabilities.

They are applying for grant funding of £1,000 to cover the cost hiring a stage and sound monitor system for live entertainment.

(The grant report for this project is outlined in Appendix 7)

8.5 **Royal British Legion RBL – Letchworth Branch Armed Forces Day**

The RBL Letchworth Branch are requesting grant funding of £1,000 towards Armed Forces Day event taking place this year on Broadway Gardens on Saturday 27th June. The event aims to support armed forces past and present, and to provide the local community with an understanding of the services they provide. The organisation will be raising funds prior to the event via coffee mornings being held in the Town Centre.

They also have applications for funding being considered by Community Covenant and the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation.
(The grant report for this project is outlined in Appendix 8)

8.6 Update on Letchworth Garden City Eagles

Follow up from the grant awarded to LGC Eagles Football Club of £3500 towards a capital project to add a lounge/ function room extension to its existing changing room/ clubroom building and extend the kitchen facility. The new facility will provide a welcoming environment for parents and other visitors on match days, particularly during spells of bad weather, and meeting place for teams and committees, and will generate extra income to the club from fund raising events, lettings and increased sales of refreshments, that can be used to improve and maintain the facilities to a high standard.

The Club has now received confirmation of funding from the Football Foundation and the Football Stadia Improvement Fund, so the project will now move to the next stage of seeking tenders for the building work. It is hoped building will commence in the autumn

8.7 Highways Matters

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

At the meeting of the Letchworth Committee held on Wednesday 3 December it was agreed that members would discuss the option for Letchworth Committee to set aside £5,000 from the Discretionary Budget for Highways matters.

This money to be allocated to projects funded by County Councillors from their Locality Budgets. It is suggested that the £5,000 be allocated as follows:

- £2,000 towards projects funded by County Councillor Kercher
- £2,000 towards projects funded by County Councillor Hone
- £1,000 towards projects funded by County Councillor Muir

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.

Members are reminded that the budget policy for NHDC is that the Authority will not fund from its budget services which are the statutory responsibility of another statutory body; In this case, that would be Herts County Council as the highways provider. Area Committee grants are required to be spent in accord with the budget policy of NHDC under both the Council's Constitution Section 16 Budget and Policy framework (below)

16.3 Decisions outside the Budget or Policy Framework

16.3.1 Subject to the provisions of paragraph 16.4 (Urgent Decisions Outside The Budget or Policy Framework) any Committees, whether they be: the Cabinet, Area Committees, Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Finance, Audit & Risk Committee; or individual members of the Cabinet, or any Officers may only take decisions which are in line with the Budget and Policy Framework. If any of these bodies or persons wishes to make a decision which is contrary to the Policy Framework, or contrary to or not wholly in accordance with the Budget approved by Full Council, then that decision may only be taken by the full Council, subject to paragraph 16.4 below.

16.3.2 It is the responsibility of the decision-taker to take advice from the Monitoring Officer and/or the Chief Finance Officer as to whether the decision they want to make would be contrary to the Policy Framework, or contrary to or not wholly in accordance with the Budget.

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. 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 has delegated powers, as a body, 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 2014/15 baseline budget has stayed the same as the previous year.
- 10.2 The former MoU Budget is subject to a 7.1% reduction each year through to start of the financial year 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 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 Development 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 1 Letchworth Area Committee Budget Report 2014/15
- 15.2 Appendix 2 Letchworth Area Committee Budget Report 2015/16
- 15.3 Appendix 3 Howard Garden Social Centre – Grant Report
- 15.4 Appendix 4 Wednesday Drop In Club – Grant Report
- 15.5 Appendix 5 Yvonne Savage Club for Partially Sighted – Grant Report
- 15.6 Appendix 6 Letchworth Town Partnership – Grant Report
- 15.7 Appendix 7 Jackie's Drop In – Grant Report
- 15.8 Appendix 8 Royal British Legion (Letchworth) – Grant Report
- 15.9 Appendix 9 Area Committee Summary Update 2014 – 2015

16. CONTACT OFFICERS

16.1 Author: Claire Morgan Community Development Officer – Letchworth
Telephone: 01462 474226
Email: claire.morgan@north-herts.gov.uk

16.2 Contributors: Shah Mohammed, Assistant Accountant
Telephone: 01462 474240
Email: shah.mohammed@north-herts.gov.uk

Liz Green, Head of Policy & Community Services
Telephone: 01462 474230
Email: liz.green@north-herts.gov.uk

17. BACKGROUND PAPERS

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