

**LETCHWORTH COMMITTEE
9 SEPTEMBER 2015**

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

AGENDA ITEM No.

6

TITLE OF REPORT: GRANTS, 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.

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.
- 2.2 That the Committee considers the application for grant funding of £1,000 to Letchworth City Chorus towards their Community Sing Day as outlined in 8.1.1, appendix 2
- 2.3 That the committee considers grant funding of £1,500 (being the maximum the officer has authority to recommend) to Norton Bowls Club who are requesting £1,800 as a 50% contribution to the cost of refurbishment of the Bowling Green, as outlined in 8.1.2, appendix 3
- 2.4 That the committee considers grant funding of £ 1,500 (being the maximum the officer has authority to recommend) to Home-start North Herts who are requesting £7500 towards volunteer training to assist Letchworth families in crisis, as outlined in 8.1.3, appendix 5, and in the light of recent decisions by Herts County Council in regard to ceasing grant funding and committing transitional funding as also described at 8.1.3
- 2.5 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 RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1 Consultation with relevant 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 current financial year 2015/16.
- 7.2 The spread sheet also details pre-allocated sums carried forward from the previous financial year 2014/15 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 **£31,500**. Given that there are three meetings left within this civic year this would equate to £10.500 per meeting to allocate.
- 7.4 There is **£248** funds remaining in the carried forward amounts from within the Area Committee's 2014/15 Area Grant Budget that £220 have been allocated towards the cost of producing a leaflet for Councillors Surgeries.

8. GRANT FUNDING AND COMMUNITY UPDATE

8.1 Grant Funding

8.1.1 Letchworth City Chorus

The Letchworth City Chorus are requesting £1,000 grant funding towards the cost of running a free Community sing day on 12th September in the Free Church. The funding is to cover the cost of bringing in an internationally renowned Choir master and musical director, his assistant musical director and live musicians for the day of free workshops aimed at anyone aged 18 and above. The day will culminate in a performance of the pieces worked on during the day to which friends and family will be invited to take part as an audience.

City Chorus will be funding the cost of venue hire, publicity and refreshments from their own reserves (As outlined in recommendation 2.2, appendix 2)

Councillors will be aware that City Chorus was awarded grant funding in September 2014 and an update on that grant is outlined under 8.2.2. Members may therefore wish to consider whether to provide now an additional grant to an organisation which has not yet spent money allocated by the committee in the previous financial year; discussion on that option is invited and provided for in recommendation 2.2 above.

8.1.2 Norton Bowling Club

The Norton Bowling Club is based on the green to the rear of the Three Horse Shoes Public House in Norton. The land is owned by the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation and leased to Unique Pub Properties who in turn lease the bowling green site to Norton Bowling Club. The Club is requesting £1800 grant funding towards the cost of uplifting two edges of the bowling green which have subsided. The total cost of this work is £3600 and the remaining funds will be provided from the Club's reserves. The Club has 34 members whose ages range from 15 years to 90 years old.

The Norton Bowling Club is part of the Town's history as it is Letchworth's oldest bowling club founded in 1908. The club intend for the work to be carried out during the winter months over 2015 /16 and it is hoped that by bringing the green up to standard this will improve the quality of their competitions and encourage new members.
(As outlined in recommendation 2.3, appendix 3)

8.1.3 Home-Start North Herts – Grant Application

Home Start North Herts supports families who are unable or unwilling to engage in mainstream statutory services. Families struggling with mental health, children with disabilities whose behaviour is so challenging they can't go out, families with a history of social care intervention, families where parents are terminally ill, or where children are ill and are surrounded by professionals but have no local family or emotional support.

Home-Start engages volunteers in a 40 hour preparation training course and then begin supporting their first family. Research shows the important role volunteering plays in all generations including supporting people back into employment in younger generations and creating purpose in retirement.

Locally, Home-Start would like to continue to support vulnerable families and constantly seek funding to achieve this objective. On average it costs about £1,400 to support one family per year. That cost includes training and expenses for the volunteer. The volunteer will spend between 2 to 3 hours with their allocated family once a week, although sometimes this can be more depending on the families needs.

In order to support 5 additional families in Letchworth it would cost about £7,000.

Home Start wishes to arrange a family fun day in Letchworth. The kind of event would be similar to a local fete, stalls with items for sale, games to play, bouncy castle etc. They would put together flyers and promote the event locally in the papers, radio and local shops.

They recently held a similar event in Hitchin funded by the Hitchin Area Committee, which went really well, even with heavy rain on the day. This gave the charity an opportunity to talk to and raise the profile of Home-Start to local businesses and the local community. The cost to run the fun day is estimated at £500.

Members should be aware that Home-start are also requesting the same contribution from Baldock Area Committee to support families within the Baldock & District area, however, funding received for Letchworth families will be ring fenced that use.
(As outlined in recommendation 2.4, appendix 4)

Members will also be aware from media coverage that Home-Start have recently been subject to a cessation of their £390k central grant funding by Herts County Council. The decision to no longer commission 'a discrete home visiting service' was based on what they saw to be a wide range of other funded services available to families with young children. There is a safety net of £200k transitional funding to assist the organisation to move to more sustainable funding and to review their operating model.

This grant award by the council's area committees should also be considered in the light of those potential changes, and HCC considering how other, existing services such as district nurses, health visitors and children's' centres could also provide additional support to these families in the longer term. The committee may be minded in the interim to provide financial support to relevant elements of the application which best apply to Letchworth, such as a Letchworth Home-Start 'fun day' as already described.

8.2 Community Update

8.2.1 Update on Jackmans Community Centre Old Library Development

The £5,000 Capital Visioning funding that was awarded by the Letchworth Committee to the project in March 2014 towards the redevelopment of the Jackmans Old Library has now been released. This has allowed the Community Association to engage the services of an architect to draw up plans. The first tranche of Section 106 monies is being drawn down for the replacement of the windows which have now been installed. The association are in the process of engaging contractors for the rest of the works.

8.2.2 Update on previous grants awarded

City Chorus received £1250 for staging and safety barriers in September 2014. The project has been delayed, in part due to a change in the Management Committee. The present Committee are in the process of making an application for charitable status which should be in place by the end of 2015. The new committee are now in the process of seeking quotes for purpose built staging.

They have received a quote, however this did not meet their technical, or health and safety requirements and they are currently in discussion with another contractor.

City Chorus are proceeding in two phases as the grant does not cover the complete requirement. They have designed a set that can be built in modular fashion, with phase two being done as and when the funds have been raised.

The grant funding for this project is entirely ring-fenced in the group's accounts, and will be paid to a contractor in phases between August and October provided adequate detail of costs are received prior by NHDC. Members are additionally invited to consider whether the delay in seeking charitable status, still to be confirmed, and changes in management which have caused the original staging project not to progress to date should render a second application by the group, described at 8.1.1 above, invalid until such time as the first grant is spent.

8.3 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.

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.

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 Communities 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 City Chorus – Grant Report
- 15.3 Appendix 3 Norton Bowls Club – Grant Report
- 15.4 Appendix 4 Home-start North Herts – Grant Report

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17. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.