

**LETCHWORTH COMMITTEE
9 MARCH 2016**

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

AGENDA ITEM No.

6

TITLE OF REPORT: GRANTS, AND COMMUNITY UPDATE

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF POLICY & COMMUNITY SERVICES

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: 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 £1,500 (being the maximum the officer can recommend) for the Citizens Advice North Herts who is requesting **£20,000** and having considered the officer advice as outlined in 8.1.1, Appendix 2.
- 2.3 That the Committee considers the application for grant funding of £1,500 (being the maximum the officer can recommend) to Jackie's Drop In who are requesting **£5000** grant funding as outlined in 8.1.2 Appendix 3.
- 2.4 That the Committee considers the application for grant funding of £1,500 (being the maximum the officer can recommend) to Letchworth Town Centre Partnership who are requesting **£2,000** as outlined in 8.1.3 Appendix 4.

- 2.5 That the Committee considers the application for grant funding of **£1000** to the Royal British Legion Letchworth Branch Armed Forces Day event as outlined in 8.1.4, Appendix 5.
- 2.6 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

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 current level of unallocated funds within the Area Committee's 2015/16 Area Grant Budget is **£14,415**. This is the last meeting of the financial year and should the members be minded to agree each grant request outlined under item 2 the amount would be £33,000. As the budgets have been agreed for the 2016/17 year members may allocate funds from that budget to be released after April 1st 2016.
- 7.3 There is **£248** remaining in the carried forward amounts from within the Area Committee's 2014/15 Area Grant Budget of which £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 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.

They are seeking a contribution to the fit out of a new head office in Letchworth following a move to new premises. The relocation is required as they 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 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. 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.

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. 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 Appendix 2)

8.1.2 Jackie's Drop In Centre

Jackie's Drop In Centre is currently based on the ground floor of St Michaels House on Norton Way South. The group were provided with these premises by the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation (LGCHF) but due to the planned sale and redevelopment of building the LGCHF have offered a new site of a two storey building on the corner of West View and Broadway.

The new premises have been vacant for many years and require substantial maintenance and repair prior to being fit for use.

This work is due to be undertaken by North Herts College the former tenants and the landlord (LGCHF). In addition the Heritage Foundation has agreed to provide £10,000 to fit out kitchen and bathroom facilities.

The quotes received by the group for the necessary internal alterations are in the region of £30,000. The volunteers from the group are currently raising funds via a number of campaigns. They have already raised £6,000 via an on-line crowdfunding site and they are planning a number of fund raising events during the year.

Despite funds raised already and the considerable support from LGCHF none of the costs above take into consideration the day to day fixtures and furnishings that will enable the Drop In Centre to continue to provide the required level of service.

They will also need, Televisions, extra computer equipment, DVD players. The group are planning to run workshops on healthy eating and cookery as well as provide lunches to their users. Again the LGCHF have agreed to fit a kitchen but they will also require Food Mixers, Food Processor, Cooking Utensils, Pots, Saucepans, Knives, Chopping Boards, Cutlery, and Crockery.

They need blinds for the whole building which was built circa 1970 and is designed with walls of windows on almost every elevation.

Jackie's Drop In Centre is requesting £5,000 from the Area Committee towards the cost of the fixtures, fittings and soft furnishings.

Officer recommendation is that, as the lease on the building is yet to be signed if Members are minded to allocated grant funding this will not be released until the group has legal tenancy of the building and are ready to move in. (As outlined in Appendix 3)

8.1.3 Letchworth Town Centre Partnership

As requested by Members at the last meeting held on 27th January 2016 the Letchworth Town Centre Partnership (LTCP) who are organising 4 major town centre events this year are applying for grant funding for each event separately. At the last meeting the Committee agreed to support the Food & Drink Festival planned for the May bank holiday weekend with £2,500 grant funding.

The LTCP are currently seeking £2,000 grant funding towards the cost of the Town Centre Take Over event to take place on Saturday 23rd July. This event will consist of town centre stages, live music, dance and street theatre with high quality walk-about street entertainers (along the lines of Titan the Robot as seen in previous years).

The LTCP returning to each meeting to apply for funding towards events separately will necessitate them attending at the June meeting to apply for their event in October and subsequently applying for the September Area Committee meeting for funding towards the Christmas Light switch on.

(As outlined in Appendix 4)

8.1.4 Royal British Legion Letchworth Branch -Armed Forces Day Event

The Armed Forces Day event is to take place on Broadway Gardens on 25th June 2016. The day aims to bring the local community together in order to say thank you to members of the armed forces and uniformed services past and present for the valuable services they provide.

It will also help to promote local groups such as Scouts, Army Cadets, Sea Cadets and Police Cadets and provide an opportunity to bring the local community together and build cohesion between generations and diverse cultures of the town.

Funding is being sought from Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation for part of the event and from the Ministry of Defence towards the cost of publicity and marketing. The RBL Letchworth Branch is applying for £1000 towards the cost of Stage and PA hire for the event. This will be the third year the RBL Letchworth has organised the event and the Letchworth Area Committee has contributed £1000 towards the two previous events in 2014 and 2015. (As outlined in Appendix 5)

8.2 **Community Update**

8.2.1 Councillor's Community Surgeries

Following discussions in Area Committee meeting Members decided to continue the Community Surgeries on alternate months on the 3rd Saturday.

The Councillors Surgeries were re-instated in September 2015. Due to the being the location with the highest recorded footfall in the Town Centre the Garden Square Shopping Centre was selected as the most appropriate location for this type of community engagement.

The first event took place on Saturday morning 19th September at which six issues were raised. Five were Hertfordshire County Council issues mostly relating to Highways and were reported by officers on the HCC Website. One was in regard to playing fields in the Westbury area of the town which were formerly part of the Wilbury School playing fields. The query was able to be answered on the spot and no further action was needed.

The second event took place on 21st November. A very busy morning in the town centre as it was the day of the Christmas Light switch on and other street entertainment and markets were taking place. There were no queries.

There was a Surgery booked to take place on 16th January but it was cancelled due to bad weather.

The next Surgeries have been booked in with the operations manager in Garden Square Shopping Centre on March 19th, 21st May and 16th July. Since the Shopping Centre change of ownership any charge for erecting the Gazebo has been waived.

8.2.2 Grange Youth Wing

Youth Connexions have been hiring the Youth Wing in order to continue the Youth Services in the area. The hire has been booked as an hourly rate for three evenings per week. This arrangement has been agreed until the end of the financial year (31st March) and was set up as a temporary arrangement following the disbanding of the Grange Youth Club committee.

The Communities Officers are presently initiating meetings between Youth Connexions senior managers and NHDC officers in Estates in order to come to a long term hire or lease agreement that is agreeable to all parties.

8.2.3 City Chorus

City Chorus were awarded £1,250 grant funding towards staging and safety barriers in September 2014. Due changes in personnel on the management committee these items were purchased and installed in November 2015.

The purchase enabled City Chorus to open the choir to new members because of the extra space it afforded and improved the quality of their performance due to the improved tiering of the choristers.

They have also loaned the staging to another musical group who were offering a charitable concert over the Christmas season.

A representative from the group was invited to attend this meeting but unfortunately will be out of the country. However, they are happy to attend a future meeting if Members request their attendance.

8.2.4 Grants Awarded in March 2015

The grants awarded to groups at the meeting 12 months ago were all for local events. £480 to the Letchworth Town Twinning towards the visit to Letchworth from visitors from the Twin Town of Chagny.

The Letchworth Rotary Club were awarded £1400 towards the Big Lunch event which took place in June 2015.

The Letchworth Town Centre Partnership received £2,500 towards the Food and Garden Festival.

All three events took place during either May or June 2015 and were extremely well attended.

City Chorus received grant funding in

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 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 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 2015/16
- 15.2 Appendix 2 Citizens Advice North Herts Grant Report – Grant Report

- 15.3 Appendix 3 Jackie's Drop In – Grant Report
- 15.4 Appendix 4 Letchworth Town Centre Partnership – Grant Report
- 15.5 Appendix 5 RBL (Letchworth Branch) Armed Forces Day – Grant Report

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17. BACKGROUND PAPERS