



NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

AREA COMMITTEE DEVELOPMENT GRANT APPROVAL FORM

1. Committee: **Southern Rural Area Committee**2. Date: **9 Jun 2016**3. Summary of application: **Funding support to move to new Head Office premises**Name of organisation: **Citizens Advice North Herts (CANH)**Sum requested: **£3,309**Total project cost: **£20,000 (NHDC)**

Brief details:

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 new premises contains the last remaining original Parker and Unwin shop front in Letchworth, and the LGC 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.

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.

Matched / linked funding: **£40,000 est**Funder: **Letchworth GC Heritage Foundation**Matched / linked funding: **£16,691**
or DRRFunder: **NHDC Area Committees**

Comments from Community Officer:

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). 12% of North Herts clients are from the Southern Rural area covered by the local area committee. The self-help advice on the website is well used and allows residents to access the information they need, enabling the CANH to manage increasing demands on the service. For those who need in-depth advice, many residents from this area use the Hitchin office (open 2 days a week for drop-ins and appointments), the main office in Letchworth (open 5 days a week), or call for telephone advice. Demand for telephone advice is high in rural areas. The move to the new premises in Station Road will allow the service to meet growing demand for face-to-face services, double the amount of telephone advice the service can offer, and train volunteers from across the district.

Benefits for clients from this area in 2015 included over £97,000 in financial outcomes generated. Broken down by ward this equated to £24,000 for Hitchwood, Offa and Hoo residents, £18,000 for Chesfield, £16,000 for Codicote, £16,000 for Cadwell, £13,000 for Knebworth and £10,000 for Kimpton. 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%, our specialist caseworkers and highly trained volunteers have a near 100% success rate.

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

The Community Development Officer has examined this application against the Authority's Area Grants Policy, the organisation's accounts and grant history, and considers it an eligible application.

Amount recommended: **£1,500**