

SOUTHERN RURAL COMMITTEE
25 JUNE 2020

PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: GRANTS AND COMMUNITY UPDATE

REPORT OF THE POLICY & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MANAGER

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

COUNCIL OBJECTIVE: BE A MORE WELCOMING AND INCLUSIVE COUNCIL / BUILD THRIVING AND RESILIENT COMMUNITIES / RESPOND TO CHALLENGES TO THE ENVIRONMENT / ENABLE AN ENTERPRISING AND CO-OPERATIVE ECONOMY /

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To advise the Committee on the current expenditure and balances of the Committee Grant budgets.
- 1.2 To bring to the Committee's attention details of recent requests received for 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 Engagement officers have been involved in.
- 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 That the Committee be recommended to consider the provision of grant funding to the organisations outlined below:
- 2.2 **£1,533 to Young People's Puppet Theatre** towards a project based at Breachwood Green JMI in King's Walden as outlined in 8.1.1
- 2.3 **£2,000 to Offley Recreation and Community Centre** towards the purchase of a commercial standard lawn mower as outlined in 8.1.2
- 2.4 That the Committee endorses the actions taken by the Community Officer to promote greater community capacity and well-being for the Southern Rural Area.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To ensure the Committee is kept informed of the work of the Community Engagement Team.
- 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 by assisting in the effective financial management of the Area Committee's budget. This ensures that all actions are performed in line with the Authority's Financial Regulations, the Council's Constitution, and the guidance of the existing Grants policy as agreed by Cabinet in June 2016.
- 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 Council Plan.

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 bodies/groups has taken place regarding funding proposals for 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 With reference to the Council's Constitution, Section 9.3 Area Committees will include budgets for the purpose of providing grants and discretionary budgets that may be used within the area of the Committee for economic, social and environmental well-being. Under the current grant criteria there is no upper limit outlined for grant funding to be allocated which can be decided at the Committee's discretion.
- 7.2 Members are asked to note the information detailed in Appendix 1. Southern Rural Committee Budget Spread sheet, which relates to the Area Committee budget balances for 2020/21. The spreadsheet also details pre-allocated sums carried forward from the previous financial years, including balances and past expenditure.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

8.1 Grant Applications

8.1.1

Applicant	Young People's Puppet Theatre
Project	Puppet Project within Breachwood Green JMI
Sum requested	£1,533
Total project cost	£6,408
Joint funding	£1000 from donations, £1000 Pending from Hertfordshire Community Foundation and £2,000 pending from Beds and Luton Community Foundation, £875 contribution from the school
Previous support	NO
NHDC Policy met	Yes
Council Objectives	Build thriving and resilient communities / respond to challenges to the environment

The YPPT runs puppet making and puppetry projects for children and young people. Their work particularly helps children who face significant disadvantage and barriers to learning including low self-esteem, special educational needs, difficulties in sustaining positive relationships and/or poor gross motor skills. The children involved develop social, practical and creative skills, from design and theatre skills to working independently.

YPPT projects offer a new environment for disadvantaged children to learn and to thrive, which improves their self-confidence and their attitude to learning, as they lose their self-perception of being "bad at school". Their projects benefit every child involved to some degree; however, the greatest impact is on children who face additional difficulties including disadvantaged backgrounds, learning and communication difficulties, and emotional and mental health issues such as anxiety, feeling stressed or pressured to achieve academically. The projects give these children a supportive environment in which they can contribute on an equal footing to their classmates, and be a real, valued part of the team for the first time in their lives.

The funding will contribute towards a project based at Breachwood Green JMI in King's Walden. The project will last 9 months and involve local children designing and making a complex marionette show from scratch. Overseen by a YPPT-approved project leader from North Herts, each child will design and make their own marionette and then collaborate with others on set design and building over weekly workshops from September 2020 until February 2021. If social distancing measures prevent this from taking place in person, they are making provisions to teach the first four months of this online so that the children do not miss out.

In the spring of 2021, each child will take a role in rehearsals and performances of the group's show. The productions will be entirely child-led, with all puppets and sets created by the children. The children will also take all roles in rehearsals and performances, from voice acting and puppetry to lighting, sound and stage management. They will also lead puppetry workshops for younger children and older people in their community, passing on their new skills.

If successful, the funding will be spent on providing high-quality materials and equipment for the children. It is important to provide a high-quality experience throughout the project so that they can exceed even their own expectations of what they can achieve.

In addition to providing professional-grade stages, YPPT have had input on the projects from sculptor Richard Austin, who pioneered the Sculptaface technique, and puppetry experts Jamie Anderson (son of the late Gerry Anderson and head of the Thunderbirds franchise) and Ronnie Le Drew (puppeteer for Zippy for many years).

In 2019, researchers from the University of Hertfordshire tracked six groups of children as they took part in one of their projects. They found that the children involved in the work benefited in the following ways:

- They develop a vast array of technical and creative skills, including technical design skills, sculpting, painting, textiles, correct use of tools, scaling, technical theatre skills, puppetry and more
- They develop a range of transferable skills and assets, including teamwork, communication, organisation, resilience, confidence, mutual respect, ability to pass on knowledge, concentration, higher aspirations, improved engagement with and attitude to learning.

Younger children in the community will also benefit from having the older children as role models, as well as by attending and being inspired by the performances.

The teachers at Breachwood Green JMI will also benefit as they develop a different view of their pupils and see alternative approaches to stretch and challenge them. This will in turn be beneficial for future cohorts of children within the school community.

Lastly, people of all ages from the local community will gain access to a relatively rare art form as they come to see the marionette performances, and attend the workshops run by the children at the end of the project.

25 children aged 9-11 from Breachwood Green in King's Walden will benefit most directly – they will be involved all the way through the project. A further 70 children from the local area will attend the performances, along with up to 100 adults from the local community, including older people.

8.1.2

Applicant	Offley Recreation and Community Centre
Project	Purchase of a commercial standard lawn mower
Sum requested	£2,000
Total project cost	£6,700
Joint funding	£2,700 agreed from Offley PC, £2000 agreed from HCC Locality budget
Previous support	£740 within the last 6 years - £600 in June 2016 towards refurb of the lounge and £140 in 2017 for practice footballs
NHDC Policy met	Yes
Council Objectives	Be a more welcoming and inclusive Council / Build thriving and resilient communities / respond to challenges to the environment / Enable an enterprising and co-operative economy

The Offley Recreation and Community Centre provide sport activities including, football, cricket and tennis alongside social and charity events all year round. They need to purchase a Commercial Lawn Mower to keep the ground maintained for Cricket, Football pitches, children's play areas and general charity events. They have secured funding from both the parish council and Cllr Barnard's County Councillor Locality Budget. They are requesting £2000 from the Committee to make up the difference.

8.2 Previous Grant Awards

8.2.1 **Breachwood Green Cricket Club** received £780 in March 2019 towards the cost of securing the footing of two storage containers. Officers contacted the club representatives in February this year and was informed that the project was due to be carried out by April. However, due to the Coronavirus lock down and subsequent social distancing measures they were unable to undertake the work. Following discussions with the Community Engagement officer they have agreed the work will be carried out by the end of September. If the project isn't complete by then they will be requested to return the funding.

8.2.2 Knebworth Covid Response Team

This group has been set up in order to meet the needs of the Knebworth local community in response to the Covid-19 virus pandemic. Their main services are provided to 2500 households and include:

- Telephone advice line and on-line team for support & assistance, 8am – 8pm, 7 days a week. This links to our voluntary network to provide:
- organised collection of shopping/medicines
- counsellor/friend/neighbour support
- essential escorted trips to hospital/doctor
- Publication & distribution of a weekly newsletter, especially required for those without internet access

- Set up & regular updates to dedicated KCRT website www.knebresponseteam.com
- Street Marshall scheme
- Provision of meals at home for at risk/hardship residents.

The group have been provided with £1,000 grant funding from the Southern Rural budget via the Delegated Decision process (20th April) in consultation with the Chair, vice chair and Knebworth ward members. The funding will assist towards the:

- Publication of a weekly newsletter especially required for those without access to the internet.
- Costs of maintaining a telephone advice line and telephone befriending service.
- Setting up and maintaining dedicated website and e-mail address for Knebworth residents.
- Petrol costs for essential trips.
- General administration costs.
- Production of ID badges for volunteers.
- Provision of meals at home for at risk/hardship residents.

It is estimated that funding will be required for a minimum of 18 weeks and the expenditure has been based on this initial term, although future funding may be required if this period is extended. These services will be targeting: the vulnerable, the elderly, the socially isolated, essential support workers who must remain working, and those residents who are unwell and/or self-isolating.

The group will potentially be reaching up to 2,500 households or 4,700 residents in Knebworth, including Old Knebworth and Nup End.

8.3 **Covid Response in Southern Rural Parishes**

This information was collected when the parish councils were approached in April to find out what assistance they were providing or knew of in their area. They were informed that NHDC may be able to provide support and assistance if required.

We have contacted them again in early June to see what their current needs are and to inform them of the creation of the Covid Community Support fund should they need financial support.

In addition to the Knebworth Response group who were assisted in April, we have been advising the Ickleford Community Larder. They have been linked in with our Food provision networking group in order that they can utilise the other groups locally such as Food Bank, Food Rescue groups and Feed Up, Warm Up.

Ickleford Larder has been established by volunteers to provide food to those in need in Ickleford, Pirton, Holwell, Arlesey and Henlow. It is located at Ickleford Village Hall and is open Wednesday 5pm to 7pm, Friday 5pm - 7pm and Sunday 2pm - 4pm. They are receiving food from Hitchin Food Rescue Hub and donations from residents. Volunteers can deliver locally if someone is unable to leave the house. They have applied to the new Covid-19 Community Support Fund for financial assistance.

Please see below all the groups we are currently aware of:

Kings Walden Parish Council	Community help service
Pirton Parish Council	Covid Action Group Pirton
Kimpton, Peters Green and Blackmore End	Kimpton Cares phonenumber - 8am to 8pm
Ickleford and Holwell	Helping Hands groups
Ickleford, Pirton, Holwell, Arlesey and Henlow	Ickleford Larder - Food provision
Knebworth Response Team	phone line open 8am-8pm 7 days a week
Whitwell Coronavirus Support	Help with shopping, posting mail, urgent supplies, friendly phone calls.
Preston	Preston PC and The Preston Trust are operating a support telephone line for anyone in need in their area.

In addition, the Hitchin Partnership (a collaboration between the Hitchin Youth Trust, Hitchin Rotary and the Hitchin Schools Partnership) have been providing food / supermarket vouchers to families who would have been in receipt of free school meals. Since the Coronavirus lock down the number of families in this category has greatly increased.

The table below outlines the number of families in the Southern Rural area that are currently receiving food vouchers.

Breachwood	1
Cockernhoe	6
Ickleford	1
Kimpton	1
St Ippolyts	1
Offley	5
Preston	1

8.4 Highways Matters

- 8.4.1 This section is included within the community update report for each committee cycle to facilitate debate and enable appropriate feedback on any of the proposed or listed Highways related schemes.

Any new proposals or revised schemes 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 Area Committees have delegated power under section 9.8.1 (a) & (b) to allocate discretionary budgets and devolved budgets within the terms determined by the Council and outlined in the current Grant Policy agreed by Cabinet in January 2020. Section 9.8.2 (h) of the Constitution in respect of Area Committees' Terms of Reference provides that they may: "establish and maintain relationships with outside bodies/voluntary organisations operating specifically with the area including, where appropriate, the provision of discretionary grant aid/financial support etc. but excluding grants for district-wide activities".
- 9.2 Chapter 1, s1-8 of the Localism Act 2011 provides a General Power of Competence which gives local authorities the powers to do anything if it is not specifically prohibited in legislation.
- 9.3 Section 137 of the 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 As outlined in Appendix 1 Committee budget 2020/21
- 10.2 There are carry over amounts from 2019/20 equating to £10,982 and these funds will be utilised ahead of allocating this financial year's budget. The grants to the Knebworth Covid Response and Codicote Tennis Club which were both agreed by Delegated Decision have been taken from last year's budget. Both grants amount to £4,500 leaving £6,482 to be utilised.
- 10.3 The 2020/21 budget contains £8,700 in addition to the £6482 from 2019/20 provides a total budget of **£15,182**
- 10.4 The grants outlined in in this report equate to **£3,533** and would be taken from the 2019/20 carry forward. This will leave £2,949 in addition to the budget of £8,700 for this year. Providing a total budget of £11,649 available for the September and December meetings.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 There are no relevant risk entries that have been recorded on Pentana Risk, the Council's performance and risk system. Individual events should have their own risk assessments in place to mitigate any health and safety issues. Whenever a request for grant funding for equipment is received, the recipient of the funding will be advised to obtain insurance for the item to avoid a repeat request for funding in the event of the equipment being stolen or damaged. There are no pertinent risk implications for the Authority associated with any items within this report.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1. 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, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 12.2 Area committee funding is awarded to community groups that clearly demonstrate positive impact on the community and wider environment. The projects outlined in this report seek to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1. The Social Value Act and "go local" requirements do not apply to this report.

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1. There are no known Environmental impacts or requirements that apply to this report.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 There are no pertinent Human Resource implications associated with any items within this report.

16. APPENDICES

- 16.1 Appendix 1 - 2019/20 financial year budget sheet

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18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 18.1 Review of Policies and Procedures for Financial Assistance to Voluntary and Community Organisations, November 2002.
- 18.2 Review of Grant Policy Cabinet January 2020