

**ROYSTON AND DISTRICT COMMITTEE
1 JULY 2020**

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF REPORT: GRANTS & COMMUNITY UPDATE

REPORT OF THE POLICY & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MANAGER

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

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

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 officer has 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 allocating funding from their discretionary community budget towards the project below.
- 2.2 **£1300** to North Herts Emotional Support in Schools Service (NESSIE) to assist with the costs for running on-line and telephone support service as outlined in 8.1.1.
- 2.3 That the Committee considers and agrees on the future provision of Councillor Surgeries as detailed in 8.2.1

- | | |
|-----|--|
| 2.4 | That the Committee notes the award of £450 via Delegated Authority to Royston Round Table to assist the Royston Vs Coronavirus Support Group. |
| 2.5 | That the Committee be recommended to endorse the actions taken by the Community Engagement Officer to promote greater community capacity and well-being for Royston. |

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To ensure the Committee is kept informed of the work of the Community Engagement 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 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 January 2020.
- 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.
- 3.4 During the Coronavirus Pandemic, whilst it has not been possible to carry out the usual face to face surgeries, Members have been successfully engaging with residents via on-line zoom surgeries. Members are asked to comment and agree on the type of Community Engagement they wish to pursue moving forward and the frequency of these sessions.
- 3.5 To support the Royston Vs Coronavirus Support Group, the Royston & District Committee agreed to award £450 to assist with costs for DBS checks for volunteers, publicity costs and the purchase of essential Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). This funding was required at the start of the Covid-19 Pandemic, which fell outside of the Committee cycle, so it was necessary to process the funding application via Delegated Authority. Funds were released to the Royston Round Table as the Royston Vs Coronavirus Support Group did not have its own Bank Account. £400 was allocated from the Royston & District Committee's 2019/20 carry forward and £50 from its 2020/21 base budget.

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 Executive decision and has therefore 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 the amount of 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. Royston Area 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 year, including balances and past expenditure.
- 7.3 Funding available for the Committee to allocate during 2020/21 is summarised below:

	2019/20 Carry Forward	2020/21 Base Budget	Total Budget Remaining
Royston	£0*	£6,000*	£5,950

(See 3.5 above with reference to allocation of funding to Royston Round Table from the 2019/20 carry forward and the 2020/21 base budget)

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

8.1 Grant Applications

8.1.1

Applicant Project	North Herts Emotional Support in Schools Service
	Funding support to assist with costs associated with providing on-line and telephone counselling service
Sum requested	£1,300
Total project cost	£2,000
Match funding	£700 own funds

Previous support	Yes, £900 in 2016 to assist with costs for running a series of Self-harm forums.
NHDC Policy met	Yes
Council objective:	Build thriving and resilient communities

North Herts Emotional Support in Schools Service (NESSIE) is seeking funding support from the Royston & District Committee to assist with costs for running on-line and telephone counselling support services. This work is targeting specific families where they are going to struggle to get their children back to education more specifically because of being 'hard to reach' having experienced Trauma or that their child has neurodiversity. The other counselling organisations don't tend to work with this group but it is a specialist area of Nessie's. NESSIE work with children and families where there is no other pathway for support and the families are often at risk of breakdown or missing education. Schools have already identified families that they wish NESSIE to support.

NESSIE, is a community interest company that was set up in 2015. The company is made up of 2 Volunteer Committee Members, 9 full time paid staff and 11 part time paid staff. NESSIE provides a service that is not delivered by other counselling organisations.

The group are requesting £1,300. Under the current grant criteria members are at liberty to award any amount they wish up to the available budget as outlined in Appendix 1.

8.2 Community Engagement Updates

8.2.1 Future Councillor Surgery Provision in Royston

The last face to face Councillor Surgery was held on Saturday 14th March on Angel Pavement. Due to the Coronavirus Pandemic the Councillor Surgery planned for July has been cancelled.

During the Pandemic, weekly on-line zoom Community Surgeries have been run in Royston and these are set to continue until the end of July. On-line surgeries have proved popular and have been used in other towns within North Herts. Part of the success of the on-line surgeries is that they have successfully engaged with residents of different demographics to the standard face to face surgeries. For example a higher number of youngest residents have engaged in the on-line zoom surgeries.

The face to face Councillor Surgeries are currently held on an 8/9 weekly cycle in Royston, compared to monthly in Letchworth and Hitchin. Baldock does not currently operate Councillor Surgeries. The frequency of surgeries in Royston has been unchanged for the last 4-5 years.

Moving forward it has been suggested that a marriage of face to face and on-line surgeries could be utilised in Royston. It has also been suggested to the Royston CEO that the face to face surgeries should be held more frequently and on a monthly basis.

Below are several options for Members to consider and agree moving forward:

1. Continue with on-line (Member hosted) zoom surgeries on a weekly basis during the Pandemic and then revert to the face to face Councillor Surgeries when social distancing rules have been removed and continue these on the current 8/9 weekly cycle.
2. Continue with on-line (Member hosted) zoom surgeries on a weekly basis during the Pandemic and then to revert to the face to face Councillor Surgeries on the current 8/9 weekly cycle but to compliment this with a member lead on-line zoom surgery once a month.
3. Continue with on-line (Member hosted) zoom surgeries on a weekly basis during the Pandemic and then revert to face to face Councillor Surgeries but on a monthly basis.
4. Continue with on-line (Member hosted) zoom surgeries on a weekly basis during the Pandemic and then revert to face to face Councillor Surgeries on a monthly basis and compliment this with a member lead on-line zoom surgery once a month.

The Royston CEO with assistance from colleagues in the Community Engagement Team would continue to co-ordinate the face to face Councillor Surgeries but the on-line zoom surgeries would be managed and co-ordinated by Members.

8.2.2 Coronavirus Pandemic

Impact on Events

As a result of the Coronavirus Pandemic, Royston Town Council was unable to hold the annual Royston May Fayre which was scheduled for Friday 8th May 2020. As well as being a key community event in the Royston Calendar, this event is used as an income generator for local charities /groups.

The Pandemic has also led to the cancellation of Royston in Blue in June and the annual Royston Kite Festival held in August. Both of these events help to raise awareness and essential funding for good causes as well as driving footfall for the local business of the town and will be sorely missed.

Street Food Heroes which is held monthly at Priory Memorial Gardens in Royston during the summer months is also being affected by the Pandemic. The June event has already been cancelled and July and August will only be possible if Central Government alter the current restrictions on social distancing and mass gatherings.

The Royston Community Engagement Officer (CEO) is liaising with the organiser of Street Food Heroes to see if the event could run more like a standard market without music and alcohol sales. The issue of social distancing will still need to be carefully investigated.

The Royston CEO is also investigating the possibility of holding Street Food Heroes at Coombes Community Centre during 2020 instead of Priory Memorial Gardens.

Impact on Community Buildings

The Coronavirus Pandemic has forced the temporary closure of the town's main community hub namely the Coombes Community Centre.

The Royston CEO has supported this venue by signposting them to grants available. The venue received £10k from the NHDC Business Grant. The Royston CEO is also currently investigating whether or not the Royston Day Centre is eligible for the NHDC Business Grant funding.

The Royston CEO has assisted the Coombes Community Centre Manager with checks on the building during the period of closure. This has included running the taps throughout the building on a weekly basis to reduce the risk of Legionnaires disease.

The Royston CEO is assisting the Coombes Community Centre with Phase 3 works at the building as part of their full repairing lease arrangement with NHDC and will release funds on completion of works. The Sports Hall Flooring is now complete, and the final elements of the phased works are due to be completed by mid-July 2020. As part of the flooring works, a lean/to structure was erected at the side of the building where the old ramp was positioned. The ramped area was often used as a meeting point for young people and was subject to graffiti and littering. A substantial amount of the wall enclosing the ramp was also damaged by young people climbing on it. The lean/to structure will eradicate these issues, will add to the security of the building and provide an additional storage area for the centre.

Support Groups in response to Coronavirus.

The Royston CEO has been supporting the numerous support groups that have been set up in response to the Pandemic. The Royston CEO keeps in regular contact with the Royston, Reed, Barley and Barkway support groups and has provided support with the distribution of publicity material and signposting of key information via social media.

The Royston CEO signed up as a volunteer driver for Royston Community Transport at the start of the Coronavirus Pandemic and delivers food and essential supplies to several residents on a weekly basis.

The Royston CEO has been assisting Royston Food Bank with adhoc food deliveries to vulnerable residents and has also produced a flyer to promote the Food Bank on social media.

The Royston CEO has also assisted with Operation Shield, contacting those identified in the county as most vulnerable and providing advice over the phone.

8.2.3 Community Facilities Capital Projects Fund

Following the meeting of the Community Facilities Capital Projects Panel in March, the Royston CEO has been liaising with representatives Royston Royal British Legion to obtain answers to queries raised. The Panel is now satisfied with the application and funding will be released in the coming weeks.

8.2.4 Bus Shelters

The project to install two new bus shelters in the town has been delayed due to the Covid -19 Pandemic. Funding for the bus shelters at Icknield Walk and Melbourn Road has been allocated from S106 Sustainable Transport Funds.

Royston Town Council raised the order for the works with the contractor in January 2020. Works were subject to a 12-16 week lead in time and a further 2 weeks to programme in the installation. The officer who has been leading the project from Clear Channel is currently furloughed until the end of June, so it is not yet clear when the works will be completed.

Once installed the maintenance of the shelters will be the responsibility of Hertfordshire County Council.

8.2.5 Bicycle Racks

This project has also stalled due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. It was envisaged that works would be completed by July 2020 but this is no longer viable.

The Royston CEO continues to liaise with Royston Town Council on this project and is awaiting quotes for the supply and installation of bicycle racks at Market Hill and the Heath Sports and Social Club.

Funding for the bicycle racks has been provisionally allocated from the S106 Sustainable Transport fund and will be released to Royston Town Council once a contractor for the works has been appointed.

Royston Town Council will be responsible for the ongoing maintenance of the bicycle racks.

8.2.6 Working with Youth Connexions

The Royston CEO has been liaising with colleagues from Youth Connexions who are running on-line sessions with young people in Royston. It is hoped that Youth Connexions can aid in the set up of the Royston Youth Council and that representatives from this group can also sit on the North Herts Youth Council.

8.2.7 Developer Contributions / s106 & other Capital Funding projects

- The Royston CEO has worked with external groups and colleagues in the Planning Department in the potential utilisation developer contributions and other sources of capital funding available. Under s106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as amended, contributions/obligations can be sought from developers towards the costs of providing community and social infrastructure, the need for which has arisen as a result of a new development taking place. This funding is commonly known as 'Section 106'.

Projects Completed:

- Fencing project at side of Coombes Community Centre to address anti-social behaviour
- Fencing project at Royston BMX to address anti-social behaviour

Projects in process:

- Enhancement of sporting facilities at Royston Heath with the Conservators.
- The possibility of seeking a new venue for Royston Scouts currently based at Roysia School.
- Enhanced provision of Bus Shelters at potential sites within the town
- Provision of cycle racks around Royston Town Centre.
- Youth / Spectator Shelter to address anti-social behaviour around Coombes Area
- Resurfacing and lighting project on Public Right of Way Land linking Ivy Farm with Green Drift.
- A505 Cycle Path project
- Access and Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) improvements to Royston Town Hall
- All weather Hockey pitch for Royston
- Barkway PC re the installation & disabled access to the Recreation Ground & Pavilion

If members have any projects in mind which may potentially benefit from utilising capital funds derived via the Planning process please contact the Community Engagement Officer to investigate further possibilities.

The Community Engagement Team is also collating a database of future requirements in terms of community need across the District in preparation & response to potential developments arising from the Local Plan.

Such perceived need will be communicated to planning officers to assist when negotiating any new planning obligation with prospective developers. Similarly, if Members have any suggestions of suitable projects or possible future requirements within their wards please inform the Community Engagement Officer.

8.3 Highways Matters

- 8.3.1 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.
- 8.3.2 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 December 2019. 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 provided that 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 The agreed base budget for this financial year is £6,000. This has been maintained at the same level as 19/20, following full council's agreement to reverse the planned efficiencies. £50 of this as well as £400 from the 2019/20 carry forward budget has already been allocated to Royston Round Table for the Royston Vs Coronavirus Support Group Funding left to allocate is £5,950.

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. For example, children and disadvantaged families in particular will be the targeted beneficiaries of opportunity as per the application outlined in 8.1.1.

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 - 2020/21 financial year budget sheet.

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

- 17.1 Author: Ashley Hawkins, Community Engagement Officer for Baldock & Royston
Email: ashley.hawkins@north-herts.gov.uk ext.4225
- Contributors: Reuben Ayavoo, Policy & Community Engagement Manager
Email: reuben.ayavoo@north-herts.gov.uk ext. 4212

Anne Miller, Assistant Accountant
Email: Anne.Miller@north-herts.gov.uk ext. 4374

Yvette Roberts, Legal Officer
Email: Yvette.roberts@north-herts.gov.uk ext. 4310

Kerry Shorrocks, Corporate Human Resources Manager
Email: Kerry.shorrocks@north-herts.gov.uk ext. 4224

Tim Everitt, Performance & Risk Officer
Email: tim.everitt@north-herts.gov.uk ext. 4646

Georgina Chapman, Trainee Policy Officer
Email: georgina.chapman@north-herts.gov.uk ext. 4121

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.