

**HITCHIN COMMITTEE
5 DECEMBER 2017**

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

AGENDA ITEM No.

6

TITLE OF REPORT: GRANTS AND COMMUNITY UPDATE

REPORT OF THE COMMUNITIES MANAGER

EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND RURAL AFFAIRS

PRIORITY: ATTRACTIVE AND THRIVING / PROSPER AND PROTECT / RESPONSIVE AND EFFICIENT

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To advise the Committee on the current expenditure and balances of the Area Committee 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, which conform to the Authority's Grants Policy approved by Cabinet on June 14th 2016.
- 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 That the Committee considers allocating funding from their discretionary community budget towards the projects below:
 - 2.1.1 £650 to Herts & Essex air ambulance service towards the cost of purchase and installation of a defibrillator attached to their new charity shop in Churchgate, as outlined in 8.1.1
 - 2.1.2 £5,000 to Hitchin Hackspace for renovation of the former Bancroft Toilet block, as outlined in 8.1.2
 - 2.1.3 £984 to the Hitchin Interfaith Forum, towards the cost of purchase and installation of a picnic table bench in the Peace Garden at the Hitchin Friends meeting house, as outlined in 8.1.3
 - 2.1.4 £592 to Hitchin Hedgehog Care for specialist equipment needed to care for sick hedgehogs to enable their release back to the wild, as outlined in 8.1.4
 - 2.1.5 £1000 to Hitchin Stroke Group towards transport and venue hire as outlined in 8.1.5

- 2.2 That the Committee endorses the actions taken by the Community Officer to promote greater community capacity and well-being for Hitchin.

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 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 Corporate 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 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 A Hitchin Area Committee Budget Spread sheet, which relates to the Area Committee budget balances for 2017/18.
- 7.2 The spreadsheet also details pre-allocated sums carried forward from the previous financial years, including balances and past expenditure relating to the allocated and unallocated Area Capital Visioning Budgets available to the Committee.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

8.1 Grant Applications

8.1.1 Essex & Herts Air Ambulance Charity Shop

The Essex & Herts Air Ambulance unlike NHS emergency services is a charity providing a free life-saving Helicopter Emergency Service for the critically ill and injured across the local area.

The charity has launched a defibrillator project and has committed to installing Public Access Defibrillators (PADs) on the outside of, or close to all of its charity shops.

The charity is planning to open a charity shop based in Churchgate in Hitchin Town Centre and are requesting the cost of installing a PAD to the exterior of the premises.

A defibrillator is a computerised medical device used when a person experiences sudden cardiac arrest. The defibrillator delivers an electrical current through the chest which aims to shock the heart back in to a normal rhythm, allowing it to pump again. Sudden cardiac arrest is one of the UK's largest killers and the potential for saving a life is dependent on time. The chances of survival decrease by 7-10% with every minute so, the faster medical help can be given the better the chance of survival.

The charity are requesting £650 to purchase and install the equipment that could save lives of those people living, working or visiting the town centre.

It is suggested that if successful the funding would be released following the receipt of written confirmation of the charity shop opening.

8.1.2 Hitchin Hackspace

Hitchin Hackspace is a community organisation devoted to providing everyone with a place to explore all kinds of creative technologies and crafts. Their members learn new practical and technical skills, make their own designs and repair items, either for themselves or others in the wider community.

Having used a hut based at Ransoms Recreation Ground, Hitchin Hackspace has now signed a 5 year lease with North Hertfordshire District Council to operate from the former toilet block adjacent to Bancroft recreation ground. However, the building requires refurbishment and renovation, internally and externally before it can be used in order to transform the disused, dilapidated structure into a vibrant community hub.

Hackspace volunteers will be under taking as much of the manual work themselves as they are able. Specialists will be brought in as required to undertake electrical and plumbing work. In this way the group aim to keep their labour costs to a minimum but require funding towards the purchase of materials and qualified trades people when appropriate.

Hitchin Hackspace is working to encourage STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) subjects and 'making' within the North Hertfordshire community. They provide access to tools and knowledge that would otherwise be unavailable and invest in, and house a range of equipment - from woodworking tools to digital manufacturing tools such as laser cutters and 3D printers which are beyond the budget of individuals. The group also get involved in outreach work with local schools and youth groups.

The work on the facilities is expected to take 3-6months (finishing January – April 2018, depending on the proportion of volunteer effort versus funded contractors. The work and the majority of future member activities will be at the building on Bancroft. This work, even with the donation of in-kind volunteer hours to undertake the manual work, is estimated to cost in the region of £9,500.

Hitchin Hackspace has secured £2000 from Herts County Councillor's Locality budgets and £200 from Aviva Insurance. They are requesting £5,000 from Hitchin Area Committee towards these costs and continue to fundraise using a variety of activities.

8.1.3 Hitchin Interfaith Forum

The Hitchin Interfaith Forum were set up in 2011 to bring members of different faiths together, organise public meetings to discuss Inter-Faith matters and Inter-Faith walks in order to promote greater understanding between Faiths and diverse communities in Hitchin.

The Forum are requesting £983 towards the purchase of a recycled plastic picnic bench and seating unit to be installed in the Peace Garden at the Hitchin Friends Meeting house on the corner of Paynes Park and Bedford Road. The cost of the unit including a plaque explaining that was provided by the Hitchin Interfaith Forum and installation equates to £1,024 the Forum have raised £40 towards this at their AGM.

8.1.4 Hitchin Hedgehog Care

The organisation was set up to undertake the care and rehabilitation of sick, injured and orphaned hedgehogs in 2008, they have been constituted and listed with HMRC as a charitable organisation since 2016. (The organisation is too small to register with the Charities Commission).

The group wish to purchase an incubator for very young or very sick hedgehogs, a nebuliser for hedgehogs with breathing problems and a suction pump for removal of flystrike on hedgehogs.

The organisation is requesting £592 grant funding in order to purchase the above equipment.

The organisation continuously fund raise (so far £1,400 this year) which goes to cover running costs, vets bills, medication, food, medical disposables, cleaning materials etc.

Members may be aware that hedgehogs are now on the UK's Endangered Species list, the numbers having fallen from an estimated 36,000,000 to around 1,000,000 today.

8.1.5 Hitchin Stroke Group

The Hitchin Stroke Group aims to improve the speech of stroke patients, let them meet other stroke patients and give carers two hours per week of free time. The group holds weekly, two-hour meetings at Anderson House, Florence Road, regarded by many of the clients as the highlight of their week. The group costs £1600 per year to operate and the majority of the costs are taken up with transport for the members to the club and hire of the venue. The group are requesting £1000 grant funding to continue for the next 12 months.

Hitchin Stroke Club welcomes membership from people affected by Stroke in the area. The club provides peer and communication support and offers social and recreational activities.

They require funding to continue to provide services to new and existing members living with the consequences of Stroke.

Members can self refer but many are referred by Lister Hospital.

Room hire represents 28% of the outgoings of the Group, with members' travel costs representing 56%. In terms of income, grants were 80% of income, and the remainder is generated via subscriptions.

This organisation receives no Rate Support or other formal benefits from NHDC.

In the last five years, this organisation has received the following awards:

02/09/2014 revenue support, £1,000

01/03/2016 Support costs for weekly 2-hour meetings, £1,000

Total awards: £2,000.

8.2 Update on Community Engagement

8.2.1 Bench outside Hitchin Town Hall and update on North Herts Museum

The Town Hall Manager has instructed maintenance staff to renovate the former bench that was situated on Brand Street prior to the renovation and building work on the Town Hall and Museum.

The original ends of the bench are being restored and new wooden slats have been ordered. The installation will take place shortly.

8.2.2 Community Facilities

The Communities Team have been working with both St Michaels and Walsworth Communities Centre on grant applications for capital funding needed for renovations to both buildings. This funding has now been allocated from the Community Facilities Grant Fund on condition of lease agreements being finalised. The lease agreements are in the final stages of legal agreement between the Community centres solicitor and the NHDC legal department and the funding will be released in the immediate future.

The Communities Officer is also working with the Walsworth Community Centre's fund raising sub-committee to advise them on fundraising activities generally and potential match funding streams.

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 Section 9.8.2 (g) of 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". The Area Committees also 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 June 2016.

- 9.2 Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 provides a General Power of Competence which gives local authorities the powers to do anything:-
- An individual may generally do
 - Anywhere in the UK or elsewhere
 - For a commercial purpose or otherwise, for a charge or without a charge
 - Without the need to demonstrate that it will benefit the authority, its area or person's resident or present 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 As outlined in Appendix A Committee budget 2017/18:-
The agreed budget for this financial year is £19,600. In addition to £17,800 carried forward from 2016/17 equates to a total amount of £34,900 for the provision of Community Development Grants. As outlined in recommendation 2.2 all spending should be allocated from the carry over amount until it is depleted at which point funding shall be allocated from the 2017/18 budget.
- 10.2 At the last meeting of the Committee held in September £2,000 funding was allocated (from the 2016/17 carry forward amount) towards the cost of the installation of a Bench on Brand Street. This leaves a current carry forward from the 2016/17 budget of £8,570.
Should Members be minded to provide grant funding as requested under recommendation 2.1 the total awarded will equate to £8,226.
- 10.3 The Capital Visioning funds are now all been drawn down and utilised for redevelopment projects in Bancroft Gardens.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 There are no relevant risk entries that have been recorded on Pentana Performance, 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” policy do not apply to this report.

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 A - 2017/18 financial year budget sheet

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17. BACKGROUND PAPERS

17.1 Review of Policies and Procedures for Financial Assistance to Voluntary and Community Organisations, November 2002.

17.2 Review of Grant Policy Cabinet June 2016