

**ROYSTON COMMITTEE  
7 OCTOBER 2020**

**\*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

**TITLE OF REPORT: GRANTS & COMMUNITY UPDATE**

REPORT OF THE POLICY & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MANAGER

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

COUNCIL OBJECTIVES: BUILD THRIVING AND RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

**1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 To advise the Committee on the current expenditure and balances of the Committee Grant budgets.
- 1.2 To advise the Committee of the activities and schemes with which the Community Engagement officer has been involved in.
- 1.3 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 notes the award of £1250 via Delegated Authority to North Herts Emotional Support in Schools Service (NESSIE) to assist with costs associated with providing on-line and telephone counselling service.
- 2.2 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 Due to timing constraints it was necessary to release funds to North Herts Emotional Support in Schools service via Delegated Authority. Funding was urgently required by NESSIE to assist with costs for running on-line and telephone counselling support services from September 2020. These sessions targeted specific families (identified by Royston Schools) who were struggling to get their children back to education due to having experienced Trauma or neurodiversity.

#### **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:

|                | <b>2019/20 Carry Forward</b> | <b>2020/21 Base Budget</b> | <b>Total Budget Remaining</b> |
|----------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>Royston</b> | £0*                          | £4,700                     | £4,700                        |

## **8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS**

### **8.1 Community Engagement Updates**

#### **8.1.1 Councillor Surgeries during 2020**

At the July Royston Committee meeting it was agreed that Zoom (Member lead) Surgeries would be held on a monthly basis and that face to face Councillor Surgeries (co-ordinated by the Royston Community Engagement Officer) would be held on a 6-weekly basis. Face to face surgeries were due to commence in July but unfortunately due to the ongoing Covid-19 Pandemic both the July and September surgeries were cancelled.

Considering the ongoing Pandemic and the latest Government Guidelines announced on 14<sup>th</sup> September restricting meetings to six people, the 2 remaining Councillor Surgeries for 2020 which are scheduled for Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> October and Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> December will be held via zoom. Zoom Councillor Surgeries have been running successfully in both Hitchin and Letchworth. Just for clarity, the Councillor Surgeries planned for October and December will be run in addition to and not replacing the separate Zoom (Member lead) surgeries. The Royston Community Engagement Officer (CEO) will ensure that the surgeries are well publicised, both on public notice boards around the town, in shop windows and on social media.

#### **8.1.2 Support Groups during the Coronavirus Pandemic.**

The Royston CEO continues to support the numerous 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 continues to be a volunteer driver for Royston Community Transport delivering food to residents as required on a weekly basis.

#### **8.1.3 Street Food Heroes**

The Royston CEO has been liaising with the organisers of Street Food Heroes to try and resurrect the event in Royston. It was hoped that the events could return to Royston during the summer months and September but due to Covid-19 and social distancing requirements the event is not possible. The Royston CEO had investigated the possibility of Street Food Heroes running events at the Coombes Community Centre as an income generator for the venue, but this was not viable due to issues around ownership of the Street Trading Licence.

#### 8.1.4 Community Facilities Capital Projects Fund

In March 2020, the Royston Royal British Legion was awarded £49,431 towards costs for the refurbishment of the building. The works will be carried out in 2 phases so as to minimise disruption to the venue. Phase 1 which will include replacing the Members Lounge Toilets, the Male toilets and the glazed opening will commence on 28<sup>th</sup> September and will cost £35k. Phase 2 of the project is to refurb the main Hall at the building and this will be carried out once the Royal British legion has secured the additional funding required for this element of the works.

The Royston Royal British Legion has been reminded that the whole project should be completed within a 12 month window and that the £14k left from the NHDC funding after Phase 1 will only be released if they have secured the necessary additional funds for Phase 2 of the project. If funds not secured the remaining £14k will be reallocated to the Community Facilities Capital Projects budget for other projects.

#### 8.1.5 Bus Shelters

The Royston Community Engagement Officer (CEO) has resurrected the bus shelter project and is liaising again with the contractors Clear Channel and members of the Town, District and County Councils.

This scheme was first initiated in March 2019 and all involved are keen to get the works carried out. The project was initially to install a bus shelter at Icknield Walk and one on Melbourn Road. Funding was allocated to this from the S106 Sustainable Transport budget and an order for the works was raised by Royston Town Council in February 2020. However due to Covid-19 the project stalled.

On revisiting the project over the summer months, it was identified that the bus shelter for Melbourn Road was now being addressed by a Property Developer. The Royston CEO is now investigating the possibility of using the funding assigned for Melbourn Road on a bus shelter on Melbourn Street.

A site visit is planned for the end of September to look at a possible location for the installation on land between the War Memorial and the Town Hall front car park.

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

#### 8.1.6 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.

A site visit is planned for mid-September to finalise the location for the bicycle racks.

Funding for the bicycle racks has been 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.

#### 8.1.7 Working with Youth Connexions

The Royston CEO continues to liaise with colleagues from Youth Connexions who are running on-line sessions with young people in Royston. Youth Connexions have also been engaging with Young People in Royston at various locations around the town as part of their out-reach work.

The Royston CEO is also working with the Royston Town Council who are looking to establish a Royston Youth Council. It was hoped that the Youth Council would be set up and running during 2020 but this has been unfortunately delayed due to Covid-19. It is now envisaged that the Youth Council will be formally set up from May and fully operational by September 2021. There are currently 12 young people aged 13-16 who have expressed an interest in sitting on the Royston Youth Council. It is hoped that Youth Connexions can aid in the setup of the Royston Youth Council and that at least 2 representatives from this group can also sit on the North Herts Youth Council so that the views and concerns of young people from Royston are addressed.

#### 8.1.8 Additional Outside Classroom at Therfield First School

The Royston CEO has been liaising with the Headteacher at the school as well as officers at NHDC Planning & Conservation and Hertfordshire County Council. The Royston CEO was able to identify £10k within Hertfordshire County Council's S106 Education funding which could be utilised for the project.

The project will create a new teaching area at the front of the school which is urgently needed for group work and one to one session. The building work commenced early-September and should be completed by November 2020.

#### 8.1.9 Free After 3pm Parking Initiative in Royston

At the request of Members at the July Royston Area Committee, the Royston CEO was asked to investigate whether a reduction in funding for the Free After 3pm Parking Initiative was possible for the 2021/22 financial year given the impact of the lock down during the Coronavirus Pandemic between March and July 2020.

The Royston Area Committee, Hertfordshire County Councillors covering the Royston area and Royston First all contribute to the initiative a year in advance.

This issue was discussed at the Executive Member Briefing in September and Members were supportive of the request. At the time of writing this report the agreed financial contribution from each party had not been finalised but a reduction will be made for the 2021/22 financial year.

#### 8.1.10 Royston Day Centre Funding Application to Covid-19 Support Fund

The Royston CEO has supported the Royston Day Centre in their application for funding support from the Covid-19 Support Fund to assist with PPE costs and the purchase of activity bags for those users who are uncomfortable about returning to the centre during the Pandemic. The Royston Day Centre is seeking £2k funding and this will be discussed at the NHDC Grant Panel meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> September.

#### 8.1.11 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. (this project is still on the work programme for 2020/21 but may be delayed due to the Covid-19 Pandemic)
- 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.

## **8.2 Highways Matters**

8.2.1 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.

8.2.2 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 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 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. Funding left to allocate is £4,700.

## **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**

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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.