**HITCHIN COMMITTEE**
**1 DECEMBER 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 bring to the Committee's attention 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 allocating funding from their discretionary community budget towards the project below.

2.2 **£2,000** to Hitchin Quaker Meeting to assist with the cost of installing a sculpture in Hitchin Peace Garden as outlined in 8.1.1.

2.3 That the Committee be recommended to endorse the actions taken by the Community Engagement team 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 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 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.

## 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. Hitchin 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 years, including balances and past expenditure.

## 8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

### 8.1 Grant Applications

8.1.1

| | |
|---|---|
| **Applicant** | **Hitchin Quaker Meeting** |
| **Project** | Installation of Unity sculpture in the peace garden. |
| **Sum requested** | £2,000 |
| **Total project cost** | £10,000 |
| **Match funding** | £845 |
| **Previous support** | £3,000 in 2014 to assist with the cost of refurbishing the boundary wall on Bedford Road. |
| **NHDC Policy met** | Yes |
| **Council objectives** | Be a more welcoming and inclusive Council<br>Build thriving and resilient communities<br>Respond to challenges to the environment |

Hitchin Quaker Meeting is a religious organisation committed to peace, truth, equality, simplicity and sustainability. Individual members support many of Hitchin's community and social justice projects. The Peace Garden group was set up in 2016 in response to the centenary commemoration of WW1.
The Hertford & Hitchin Area Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends gained charitable status in 2009. Hitchin Quakers have been in the town since the 1600s.

The aim of the Peace Garden group is to enhance the Meeting House burial ground to create the Hitchin Peace Garden, open for use by general public. The group have already provided seating, a dove-shaped pond, peace pole, children's area, and mosaic.

The funding will be used to erect a sculpture called Unity at the front of the Peace Garden grounds. Its composition of two intertwined loops seeks to encourage thoughts on the connectedness and balance of all things.

The sculpture is a 2m x 2m x 0.5m structure, made of brushed stainless steel. It will necessitate a concrete block sunken into the ground to stabilise the sculpture and provide lighting as well as paving around the base to allow sufficient wheelchair access from the path. The sculpture is due to be sited at the front of the grounds, opposite the end of Brand Street where it turns into Paynes Park. Planning permission has been obtained.

The group worked together with the Art Department of Hitchin Boys' School to create the sculpture designs. Diane Maclean; Hertfordshire sculptor and environmental artist, whose work we had seen at Burghley sculpture park, has agreed to make the sculpture to the specification of the boys' design. The group have also involved members of other faiths from across North Herts in donating features to the garden.

The sculpture will benefit many Hitchin residents and beyond. The sculpture will be the focal point of the Peace Garden project. The garden is an ideal place for office and shop workers, visitors and Hitchin residents to visit, enjoy the peaceful surroundings and be

inspired by the art. The sculpture will be visible from Brand Street to both pedestrians and drivers.

It is hoped that transforming an old burial ground into a place of art will attract people from a wide area. The Peace Garden will be open to the public to come and look at all the installations, free of charge and on any day of the week. As with any public art, it is difficult to quantify how much or how many people will benefit but the groups aim is to make it accessible to all, and to provoke thoughts about unity at a time of unrest and social division.

If the funding application is successful, the making and positioning of the sculpture will take about 3 months to deliver. This is planned for early 2021, although current circumstances make it difficult to predict an exact date.

The accounts of the organisation have been checked by the Community Engagement Officer. The group are financially solvent and any surplus in funds has been accounted for.

The group have acknowledged that there is a disparity between the total project cost and NHDC's potential contribution. The group applied to Arts Council England for funding earlier this year, but unfortunately the application was rejected. The group noted that obtaining funds from other organisations becomes easier when there has been at least one donation from a recognised body. The group intend to apply to Rotary in Hitchin and the Area (Quaker) Meeting committee called Quaker Work. The group also plan to approach Herts Community Foundation. It is understood by the group that funds won't be released until the project is financially viable and the project is able to take place in line with Covid-19 regulations.

The Community Engagement Officer has also seen copies of the groups Safeguarding document, constitution and risk assessment which includes Covid-19 safe measures. All documents meet the grant criteria.

The club are requesting £2,000. 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 UPDATE

### 8.2.1 Policy and Community Engagement Team

The team have been continuing to engage and network with local community groups and initiatives. This involved:

- Supporting various local and district wide Network Groups such as Youth Action, Food Provision and Westmill.
- Facilitating virtual Hitchin Councillors' Surgeries via Zoom.
- Providing Covid-19 related advice to various Hitchin based Community centres.
- Continuing discussions about Holocaust Memorial Day and Chair's Volunteer Awards.
- Organising Community Support Fund panels and liaising with applicants.
- Gathering speakers and information for the Cabinet Panel for Community Engagement and Co-operative Development.
- Supporting the first Hitchin Arts and Culture Town Talk and planning ongoing meetings of a sub-committee to encourage the creation of an Arts Cooperative.
- Completing a needs assessment of North Herts Food providers to assign the £10k DEFRA grant.
- Creation of North Herts Food and Family Support Infographics.
- Advertising free school meal provision over October half term.
- Sharing funding streams with community groups.
- Collating information on Safe and Well provision throughout the winter months.
- Assisting with yearly monitoring meetings with key partners, North Herts Centre for Voluntary Service, Citizens Advice and North Herts Minority Ethnic Forum.

## 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 Sections 9.8.1 (a) and 9.8.1 (b) of the Council's Constitution in respect of the Area Committees' Terms of Reference, notes the following:- To allocate discretionary budgets within the terms determined by the Council and to allocate devolved budgets and activities within the terms determined by the Council. This is 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 notes 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 A - Hitchin Area Committee budget sheet 2020/21.

10.2 There was no carry forward budget from 2019/20 and the base budget for the 2020/21 financial year remains at £11,000.

10.3 Thus far Hitchin committee has provided **£6,465** grant funding from the 2020/21 budget leaving **£4,535** to utilise for the remainder of the financial year.

10.4 The grant funding applied for in this round adds up to **£2,000**. If Councillors agreed this grant, there would be **£2,535** remaining of the Hitchin Committee budget.

## 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 - 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.