

**LETCHWORTH COMMITTEE
8 DECEMBER 2020**

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF REPORT: GRANTS AND COMMUNITY UPDATE

REPORT OF THE POLICY & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MANAGER

EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

CURRENT COUNCIL PRIORITIES: 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 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 allocating funding from their discretionary community budget towards the projects below.
- 2.2 **£400** to Greencare at Norton as outlined in 8.1.1
- 2.3 **£1,350** to Letchworth Rink Hockey Club as outlined in 8.1.2
- 2.4 That the Committee be recommended to endorse the actions taken by the Community Engagement team to promote greater community capacity and well-being for Letchworth.

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 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.

7.2 Members are asked to note the information detailed in Appendix 1. Letchworth 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 - Councillors are at liberty to consider any amount requested in a grant application as long as the Letchworth area committee has sufficient funds in the 2020/2021 budget.

8.1 Grant Applications

8.1.1

Applicant	Greencare at Norton
Project	Small shed and portaloo to address exclusion issue
Sum requested	£400
Total project cost	£600
Match funding	£200 personal donations and fundraising
Previous support	£4,552 (£2,052 in this financial year)
NHDC Policy met	Yes
Council Objective:	Building thriving and resilient communities

This successful project gives ongoing long-term support to vulnerable and socially excluded local residents in order overcome social exclusion through loneliness, isolation and mental health issues. They also support participants in the project to take the first steps into paid employment through collaboration with partner organisations; Settle Housing Association Tenancy Support, Job Centre Plus, and Create Community Networks Foundations 4 Work programme.

This support takes the form of allotment-based food and flower growing adapted to the needs of participants. Advice and support is given to participants to enable them to cook and appreciate fresh produce which they themselves have grown. The surplus fresh produce and flowers have been donated to food bank outlets or those in need in Letchworth and North Herts in order to avoid food waste. Wherever possible reclaimed and upcycled materials are used for the project's infrastructure. Scrap timber, a second hand shed, donated compost bins and scrap artificial turf are just some examples.

The allotment site at Norton Allotments where the project is based does not have any toilet facilities. There are several participants who by the nature of their needs find it very difficult coping with 3 hour sessions without some access to a toilet especially as the site is not near to any other facility.

This issue is in effect a barrier to inclusion for the project.

The proposal is to purchase a small shed to be located discreetly out of general view on one of the plots and equip it with a quality modern chemical toilet and accessories.

The bank account shows that as of 26-10-2020 a balance of £5,015.73 of which £3,880 is allocated for accessible pathways and patio areas which are now nearing completion. Other remaining funds (£1,135.73) are to cover seeds, plants, manure and compost, disability-friendly tools and refreshments; it is anticipated funding will be reduced due to Covid situation.

Greencare will be maintaining the toilet themselves and all necessary policies and documentation are now in place.

Greencare are very aware and grateful of how much previous funding NHDC has given the project and will understand if the application is rejected. This request is for a very small amount which could make a lot of difference to participants.

I recommend that this small amount could fund a toilet to tide the group over but would suggest we invite Greencare to fully research the cost of a bigger toilet with disabled access and approach the Committee again in the future. I am informed that the approximate price for an outdoor compost toilet suitable for disabled access is £2,800. Therefore, should the Committee consider awarding this larger amount of funding at this meeting, *(any proposed procurement will be in line with the Council's procurement strategy)* the overall amount left for the March meeting would still be a substantial £2,200.

*With a new lockdown in place activities will cease once again for the participants. Manager Ray Wilson is looking into ways to allow a limited and Covid safe access to prevent them from becoming isolated once more.

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

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

8.1.2

Applicant	Letchworth Rink Hockey Club
Project	Training for junior teams and new coaches
Sum requested	£1,350
Total project cost	£1,650
Match funding	£300
Previous support	£2,500 (awarded in the last financial year but delayed because of Covid)
NHDC Policy met	Yes
Council Objective:	Building thriving and resilient communities

2020 has brought unforeseen challenges to the club, especially financial, similarly to so many sports club and other non-profit organisations.

New health and safety guidelines put in place to enable indoor team sports to be played by young people has meant that there is an urgent need for more coaches to train the junior players.

The club was very fortunate to receive funding from this committee earlier in the year to fund places for local young people who otherwise would not have been able to join due to financial restraints. The club has been able to help nine young players join the club this season with the help of the grant. Many, if not all, of these players would have been unable to join the club and play without the reduction in fees made possible.

The club used household income as the main guide in sifting applications, but also took account of special circumstances e.g. redundancy, business closures, full-time students away from home.

This extra funding requested would enable the club to train up more volunteer coaches- one coach per group of five young people is required and currently there are not enough coaches.

The money will also fund monthly training sessions of the young players by a national accredited Coach.

Currently due to Covid restrictions senior team member sessions have been cancelled and monthly subscriptions suspended. It is also anticipated that the annual fundraising activity is unlikely to go ahead. These circumstances mean that income is greatly reduced for the club. Thanks to its current training programme, Letchworth Rink Hockey Club junior teams have most often been in the top teams of the country. This has resulted in the town of Letchworth being proudly represented in regional, national and international competitions. This can only happen if junior players continue to receive high-quality training, keeping them motivated to perform at the highest level.

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

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

8.2 Community Engagement and update on Previous Grants awarded

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:

- Working closely with Letchworth Heritage Foundation, YCH Services for Young People, Wilbury and Jackman's network groups, disseminating information as required.
- Liaising with Democratic Services re helping with young people attending the proposed Parliament Week in November. This was postponed unfortunately to a later date.

- Continuing to share and disseminate information on social media and to mailing lists, keeping in touch with the community, voluntary, statutory and non-statutory agencies.
- Facilitating virtual Councillors' Surgeries via Zoom.
- Attending meetings of the North Herts Youth Strategy Group, North Herts Families First and the Family Support Service Partnership.
- Liaising with Covid Specific Community Grant applicants including Hitchin Mental Health Recovery Team
- Continuing participation in the Inclusion Group, Shaping Our Future and the Staff Consultation Forum.
- Continued support to the Legal and Community Service Director's PA with organising a visit for the High Sherriff next year.
- Working with colleagues on the organisation of Holocaust Memorial Day event for 2021.
- Working with colleagues on the organisation of the Chair's Volunteer Award 2021.

8.2.1 Update on Previous Grants Awarded

- Preliminary photographs of the paved walkways being laid at GreenCare to make the allotment more accessible. Work is ongoing.







- Imajica Theatre Company had to finish filming the Seasonal Pantomime early because of the second lockdown and the film is now being edited.





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 Committee budget 2020/21.
- 10.2 The carry over amount from 2019/20 was £4,828. However, a grant of £3,000 awarded to the Letchworth Festival in 2019/20 has been refunded as the event was cancelled due to Covid-19. This increased the carry forward funding to £7,828, which has been fully spent.
- The budget for 2020/21 is £11,000 of which £2,900 has been spent leaving £8,100 to be allocated.
- 10.3 The grant funding applications for this meeting total **£1,750**. The committee has sufficient funds to award the full amount to all organisations as outlined on the report. If all the grants considered at this meeting are agreed it will leave a total of **£6,350** available for allocation for the next meeting.

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

- 17.1 Author: Lea Ellis, Assistant Community Engagement Officer
Email: lea.ellis@north-herts.gov.uk ext.4380

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

Jo Keshishian, Acting HR Services Manager
Email: jo.keshishian@north-herts.gov.uk ext. 4314

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

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