

**BALDOCK AND DISTRICT COMMITTEE
7 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 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 be recommended to endorse the actions taken by the Community Engagement Officer to promote greater community capacity and well-being for Baldock.

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.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1. There are no alternative options being proposed other than those detailed within the text of this report. However, during 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. Baldock 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
Baldock Town	£128	£2,400	£2,528
Baldock East	£262	£1,000	£1,262
Arbury	£0	£880	£880
Weston & Sandon	£157	£700	£857
	£547	£4,980	£5,527

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

8.1 Community Engagement Updates

8.1.1 Events Update for 2020

Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic and the resulting 4 weeks lock down during November it was necessary to cancel both the Baldock Cycle Challenge (Sunday 1st November) and the Baldock Christmas Fayre event.

8.1.2 Baldock at Christmas Plans

The Baldock Community Engagement Officer (CEO) has been assisting the Baldock Events Forum (BEF) and Baldock Rotary with paperwork and licencing requirements to allow for the erection of the Baldock Christmas Tree in Baldock High Street by the War Memorial. The Baldock CEO has liaised with Property Services on this matter. As with 2019, the BEF has received funding from NHDC for the purchase and installation of this years Christmas Tree. The tree is due to be erected during the last week of November.

The Baldock Christmas event which was planned for Saturday 5th December will now be a virtual event with the light switch on, the highlight of the event, being available to watch online only. To avoid crowds congregating in the town centre the date and time of the switch on will not be promoted in advance of the event.

To create a Christmas atmosphere within the Town the BEF will be holding a best dressed Christmas window competition amongst the businesses of the High Street and White Horse Street. The Baldock CEO will be assisting the BEF with the promotion of this event around the businesses of the town. The competition will open at the close of the current lock down and the winners will be announced prior to Christmas.

8.1.3 Baldock Beast Half Marathon

The Baldock Beast Half Marathon, which was the only event to be held during 2020 due to Covid-19 Pandemic will be returning for a 10th time on Sunday 28th February 2021. The Baldock CEO will be assisting the BEF with the pre planning of the race and will also be providing marshal support on race day. Due to the current Pandemic, the event is being arranged differently for 2021 to ensure social distancing rules can be maintained. This will include starting the runners in waves of 50 every 10 minutes. The Baldock CEO will assist the organisers with all necessary paperwork as requested by the North Herts Safety Advisory Group (SAG) including the Covid-19 Risk Assessment.

8.1.4 Support for Businesses during the Covid-19 Pandemic

At the start of the Covid-19 Pandemic the Baldock CEO signposted local businesses to the funding available from NHDC via the Business Grants. As a result of this, Baldock Community Centre, Baldock Arts & Heritage Group and numerous other organisers received £10k funding support. During November the Baldock CEO contacted all relevant businesses within the town promoting the 'Local Restrictions Support Fund'. At the time of writing this report it is unclear which businesses received support from this fund. A verbal update will be provided at the December Baldock & District Committee meeting.

8.1.5 Baldock Arts & Heritage Centre

The Baldock CEO continues to liaise and support staff at Baldock Arts & Heritage Centre with the Phase 2 works at the building. At the various stages of the works the Baldock CEO will arrange the release of funds as part of the buildings full repairing lease arrangement. Phase 2 of the project is due to be completed by 2023. Whilst the centre has been closed during the current lockdown, internal decorating works have been carried out. New windows have also been installed as well as new extractor fans in all of the toilets. The Baldock CEO has released funds as requested from the Phase 2 budget.

8.1.6 Hand Sanitiser for local community groups

During November the Baldock CEO promoted on behalf of North Herts CVS, free hand sanitiser for local community groups. As a result of this several groups approached the Baldock CEO requesting hand sanitiser. This included local Scout Groups, Baldock Community Centre, Baldock Arts & Heritage Centre, Baldock Events Forum (for use at Baldock Market), Baldock Food Bank, Ashwell Pantry, Sandon Coronavirus Support Group and Hinxworth Helpers. The Baldock CEO delivered sanitiser to all groups.

The North Herts CVS received additional sanitiser from Auto Glynn in November and the Baldock CEO will continue to liaise with local groups to ensure they have adequate supply during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

8.1.7 Covid-19 Support Fund Application from Baldock Community Centre

The Baldock CEO is assisting the Baldock Community Centre with their application to the Covid-19 Support Fund to assist with the costs for insuring and taxing the new minibus. Members will note that funding was awarded from the Baldock Base budget to assist with the purchase of the minibus. The minibus is due to be delivered during November but cannot be used until it is taxed and insured. The money needed for this was due to have been met from subscriptions from the numerous community groups who use the bus but due to the Covid-19 Pandemic the groups have not been able to meet, and no subscriptions have been received.

If the Baldock Community Centre is unable to secure funding support from the Covid-19 Support Fund, the minibus will not be able to operate and the many vulnerable residents who use the bus for transporting them to clubs held at the Community Centre will not be able to attend.

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 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 1 Committee budget 2020/21.
- 10.2 The agreed base budget for this financial year is £5,000. This has been maintained at the same level as 19/20, following full council's agreement to reverse the planned efficiencies. Carry over amounts from the 2019/2020 budgets is £547, giving a total budget remaining for the Committee across the 2-remaining meetings of the 2020/21 financial year of £5,527.

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 February 2020.