

**HITCHIN COMMITTEE
2 MARCH 2021**

***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 **£1,070** to Getting Rooted CIC to assist with the cost training for volunteers working at the Ron's Plot project 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	Getting Rooted CIC
Project	Training for volunteers at Ron's Plot gardening project
Sum requested	£1,070
Total project cost	£2,000
Match funding	£950 Crowdfunding
Previous support	£10,000 from the Capital Grant scheme to provide a greenhouse / training room
NHDC Policy met	Yes
Council objectives	Be a more welcoming and inclusive Council Build thriving and resilient communities Respond to challenges to the environment

Getting Rooted CIC based at Ron's Plot at Burford Way Allotments provide social and therapeutic horticulture through volunteer community gardening sessions. They maintain the garden and grow and share the produce amongst volunteers as well as sharing surplus with local communities via Food Rescue Hub and Sunnyside community front garden.

(Volunteers have recently been referred to the project by the GP Link Worker Hitchin & Whitwell, Hospital & Community Navigation Service)

At Ron's Plot Community Allotment, they engage with and welcome the contributions of residents, community groups and businesses; working collaboratively with local people. They often receive donations from local residents who may or may not visit the project but share advice and information on gardening and best practice with via social media. During partial school closures they shared outdoor learning activities locally and nationally via social media to encourage families to utilise the outdoors for their mental and physical wellbeing.

They work on frequent and regular opportunities to improve the partnership and relationship between the Council and with local community. Their reach extends out from their Westmill base on the Burford Way Allotments to local towns and villages of North Hertfordshire via social media.

They also coordinate gardening workshops for children and young people. They are applying for funding towards the cost of training. This will support local schools and community groups and home education networks. These groups can then start or improve permaculture designed outdoor educational settings within their own communities and bubbles. Thus, allowing their community allotment 'Ron's Plot' to be used as a learning hub and an example of good practice.

The course will take the form of on-line training run by the Permaculture Association.

With funding to train additional mentors and develop and improve the community provision at Ron's Plot they can create a range of innovative ways in which local communities from small groups to whole towns and communities of interest can be encouraged to become more involved in supporting, planning, improving and maintaining local environments.

Some of the volunteers are already involved in other green projects which they share e.g. litter picking to encourage others. Getting Rooted are also in touch with a local arts charity, local BAME charities, home education groups and local GP social prescriber (GP Link Worker Hitchin & Whitwell) to encourage future opportunities to work with a wide range of communities.

Partnership work with the above community groups will hopefully ensure that they engage more with their diverse communities including with young residents and those who are disadvantaged or in any way socially excluded. By creating not just a community garden workspace, but a safe leisure space, they hope to ensure innovations they've proposed are fit for the future and imaginative in concept and delivery

Getting Rooted CIC seek to provide a clean and safe environment in partnership with stakeholders and local people. Their permaculture values of caring for the earth; caring for people and sharing resources fairly are at the core of their practice and educating within the local community.

They are an innovative and inclusive group and would like to expand the provision by helping train up other local people within their own projects and bubbles.

This will not only increase mental and emotional well-being by working outdoors and learning how to grow their own food, but to reap the benefits of perhaps developing an entrepreneurial approach as they develop their resilience.

The training will help them to deepen their permaculture approach to land management which helps to mimic and replicate the dynamics of natural ecosystems and supports biodiversity.

With the training of additional mentors, the group will be enabled to disseminate more widely their values of caring for the earth and for local environments.

Getting Rooted CIC will continue to develop horticulture enterprise by growing surplus seedlings and plants to sell on to the local community. They also aspire to create new job opportunities by training up mentors to run workshops on site and online in order to enable and empower local communities.

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.
- Coordinating a successful on-line event to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day.
- Coordinate the Chair's Volunteer Awards, to be announced on 26th February.
- Gathering speakers and information for the Cabinet Panel for Community Engagement and Co-operative Development.
- Continuing to Hitchin Arts and Culture Town Talk and planning ongoing meetings of a sub-committee to encourage the creation of an Arts Cooperative.
- Collating information on Safe and Well provision throughout the winter months.
- monitoring and updating funding agreements 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. Including the £2,000 allocated for the Hitchin Quaker's these leaves **£2,535** to utilise for the remainder of the financial year.
- 10.4 The grant funding applied for at this meeting adds up to **£1,070**. If Councillors agreed this grant, there would be **£1,465** remaining of the Hitchin Committee budget. This would be carried over to the 2021/2022 financial year.

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.