

**SOUTHERN RURAL COMMITTEE
4 MARCH 2021**

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF REPORT: GRANTS & COMMUNITY UPDATE

REPORT OF THE POLICY & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MANAGER

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

COUNCIL OBJECTIVE: BE A MORE WELCOMING AND INCLUSIVE COUNCIL / BUILD THRIVING AND RESILIENT COMMUNITIES / RESPOND TO CHALLENGES TO THE ENVIRONMENT / ENABLE AN ENTERPRISING AND CO-OPERATIVE ECONOMY /

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 the provision of grant funding to the organisations outlined below:
 - 2.1.1 £890.00 to Down the Woods CIC towards the cost of Forest School sessions. As outlined in 8.1.1
 - 2.1.2 £744.00 to Holwell Parish Council towards the cost of a replacement notice board. As outlined in 8.1.2

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| 2.1.3 | £1,000.00 to Offley & Stopsley Cricket Club towards the cost of Upgrading the Electrics in the pavilion. As outlined in 8.1.3 |
| 2.1.4 | £2,000.00 to Offley Parish Council towards the cost purchasing playground equipment. As outlined in 8.1.4 |
| 2.2 | That the Committee endorses the actions taken by the Community Officer to promote greater community capacity and well-being for the Southern Rural Area. |

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, following a 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 decision and has 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 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 2. Southern Rural 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

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| Applicant | Down the Woods CIC |
| Project | Forest School sessions |
| Sum requested | £890.00 |
| Total project cost | £1010.00 |
| Joint funding | £60 from own funds + £60 from Aviva Crowdfund |
| Previous support | None |
| NHDC Policy met | YES |
| Council Objectives | Build thriving and resilient communities |

Down the Wood's CIC was set up 2008 and changed to a CIC in 2016. The organisation's main activities are Running Forest School sessions for children and running a community garden for people with various mental health issues and loneliness. They are based at St Pauls Waldenbury Walled garden, Whitwell.

When the current Coronavirus restrictions are lifted the group intend to offer Forest School type sessions for adults. This will target adults with varying mental health issues and people who are suffering from social isolation.

Residents will gain self-esteem and self-confidence and be able to be social with others which is so important after the recent lock downs. The funding will cover the cost of 6 people from Whitwell and the surrounding rural areas.

The project will take place in Hitch Woods and it is planned to take place in June 2021 depending on the social distancing restrictions in place at the time. If necessary, the project can take place later in the year, and will consider social distancing and Covid 19 safe practices.

The sessions will be 2 hours per week for 6 weeks. It costs £168 per person for the 6 weeks. (£28 per session per person) However there is no cost for participants.

The course will be promoted via social media and local contacts. Down the Woods CIC also work with other local organisations who may have candidates who would benefit, such as the jobcentre and food banks.

The sessions will:

- encourage the participants to mix with others from other backgrounds.
- alleviate the strain on the mental health services by helping people to thrive and become more resilient by attempting new things, gaining skills and working on their own personal development.
- encourage people to get a love for the outside therefore developing a relationship with the natural environment

8.1.2 -

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| Applicant | Holwell Parish Council |
| Project | Provision of a new notice board |
| Sum requested | £744.00 |
| Total project cost | £1,445.00 |
| Joint funding | £400 from Parish Council Funds £300 from Cllr Barnard HCC locality budget. |
| Previous support | None since 2015 |
| NHDC Policy met | Yes |
| Council Objectives | Build thriving and resilient communities |

The Parish Council wish to replace an old notice board that has rotted through and is unsightly and unsafe. They plan to replace the notice board with a new one that is made of recycled plastic, making it very strong, long lasting and weatherproof.

Being able to post notices about local issues and events enables the local community to keep abreast of community information. In particular, those who do not have internet connection /or access to a computer.

A notice board provides the means for everyone to be connected to events that affect the community such as local business services, Parish Council business and Covid 19 local information.

8.1.3

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| Applicant | Offley & Stopsley Cricket Club |
| Project | Pavilion Refurbishment – Electrical Upgrade |
| Sum requested | £1,000.00 |
| Total project cost | £3,500 |
| Joint funding | £1,500 from club fees and reserves £1,000 from Offley PC |
| Previous support | None since 2014 |
| NHDC Policy met | YES |

Council Objectives

Building Thriving and resilient communities

The Offley and Stopsley Cricket Club operate from the Offley Recreation Centre. The Cricket Pavilion needs inside upgrading. The roof was replaced back in 2018 to make the pavilion watertight. General maintenance of the Pavilion is undertaken by the Cricket Team members and their supporters.

The club are requesting funding to upgrade the electrics of the Pavilion. They have received a quote for £3,500 from a qualified electrician to carry out the work. The Club will contribute £1000 from their reserves and they have requested £1,000 from Offley Parish Council under Section 137 of the local government act 1972. They are requesting £1,500 from the Southern Rural Community Grant budget.

Should Members be minded to agree this application, officers would recommend that a condition be put in place outlining that funding will not be released until the Club have confirmed the funding is in place from Offley Parish Council.

8.1.4

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| Applicant | Offley PC |
| Project | Purchase Playground Equipment |
| Sum requested | £2,000 |
| Total project cost | £10,500 |
| Joint funding | £5,000 from PC funds and £3,500 from PC reserves = £8,500 |
| Previous support | None since 2009 |
| NHDC Policy met | YES |
| Council Objectives | Building Thriving and resilient communities; Be a more welcoming and inclusive Council |

The Offley Parish Council wish to add some new items of play equipment to the children's play area on the Elmtree Community Field based in Cockernhoe.

In 2018 they initially placed two pieces of play equipment in this location. At the time they did not have the funds to afford more than two items.

The Elmtree Avenue Community Field in Cockernhoe is maintained by the Offley Parish Council. The Parish Council are now looking to expand the facility.

All the play equipment is owned and maintained by the Parish Council and is subjected to an annual third party check each year.

Cockernhoe is a small village with the adjoining Hamlet of Mangrove Green. It is a growing community with young families and children from babies up to teenage years. There is a new development which was built back in 2011 with both Social and purchased houses

If successful, the funding would allow for a further three items to be purchased and installed. * Appendix 1 – Outline of the equipment required

Officers would like to draw attention to the amount of funds the Offley Parish Council have according to their latest accounting statement 2019/20. Their annual expenditure is £34,679 and they currently have reserves of £74,460. Therefore, they appear to have a very healthy balance.

Members may be minded to request that the Parish Council contribute a higher amount to this project than the £8,500 as outlined in their application.

8.2 Community Updates

8.2.1 Liaising with Holwell Parish council to apply to the Community Facility Capital Grant fund to rebuild the Holwell Cricket Pavilion in order to provide a much-needed additional community space in the village.

8.2.2 Pirton Parish Council have used £620 S106 funds for sustainable transport held by NHDC to refurbish the main bus stop shelter in the centre of the village

8.2.3 The Community Engagement Team have been liaising with all the Food Provision Groups and Foodbanks in the district including many groups in the Southern Rural Area. We are using funding provided from DEFRA via the County Council to provide supermarket vouchers to the food banks. These will be going to Codicote Foodbank, who also serve Knebworth and Ickleford Community Larder who also serve Holwell and Pirton.

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.

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 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 2 Committee budget 2020/21
- 10.3 Out of the 2020/21 budget of £8,700, £3,901 has been utilised and therefore leaves an amount available of: **£4,799**
- 10.4 The funding requested in the Grants Update as detailed in 8.1.1 to 8.1.4 equate to £4,634

If members are minded to agree all grants as requested this will leave a carryover amount to the 2021/22 financial year of £165.00

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 – Play equipment as outlined in 8.1.4

16.2 Appendix 2 - 2019/20 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.