

HITCHIN COMMITTEE
October 12th - 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 Members on the current expenditure and balances of the Committee Grant budgets.
- 1.2 To bring to the Members' attention recent requests received for Committee grant funding, made by community groups and local organisations.
- 1.3 To advise of the activities and schemes with which the Community Engagement officers have been involved in.
- 1.4 To bring to the Members' 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 **£430** to Getting Rooted C.I.C. at 'Ron's Plot' Community Allotment Garden for the set up and running of new adult/ teen gardening workshops as outlined in paragraph 8.1.1 of the officer's report.
- 2.3 **£800** to Hitchin Allotment Association for the purchase of a tool store and tools that they can loan out to new allotment tenants as outlined in paragraph 8.1.2 of the officer's report.
- 2.4 **£1,000** to Letchworth and Hitchin Sea Cadets for IT equipment to aid training for the cadets, camping and boating equipment, education and training events as outlined in paragraph 8.1.3 of the officer's report.
- 2.5 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 Members are kept informed of the work of the Community Engagement Team.
- 3.2 This report is intended to inform Members of the financial resources available. It draws attention to the current budgetary situation by assisting in the effective financial management of budgets. 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.

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 2021/22. 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 Hitchin area committee has sufficient funds in the 2021/2022 budget.

8.1 Grant Applications

8.1.1

Applicant

Getting Rooted C.I.C. for 'Ron's Plot' Community Allotment Garden

Project	The set up and running of new adult/ teen gardening workshops
Sum requested	£430
Total project cost	£480
Match funding	£50 Plant sales and workshop fees
Previous support	Project received £1070 previously in 2021
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 C.I.C. was set up by Aletheia Mashiri to create, demonstrate and teach models of sustainable and regenerative practice in order to foster resilience within communities using permaculture design principles (rooted in horticulture: local food production and wild life protection); drawing from the permaculture ethics of 'care of the earth' (recycling and care of the environment); 'care of people' (social and therapeutic horticulture); and 'sharing fairly' (surplus seedlings and produce shared within communities and between local green projects).

As well as their Sunnyside Community Front Garden and raised veg beds at Our Lady's Church/Hitchin Foodbank, they run an outdoor learning and sharing garden - Ron's Plot Community Allotment in Westmill. They also share surplus produce with the Hitchin Food Rescue Hub led by Lisa Harmer and try to support and encourage outside local green projects by way of plant and seedling donations.

The money will be spent on creating adult/ teen gardening workshops on sowing/thinning and potting up saved seeds taking semi-ripe herb cuttings and hardwood fruit shrub cuttings to propagate plants for free. Plant specimens growing on site at Ron's plot community allotment and saved seed. Equipment bought for these workshops can be reused for other gardening sessions.

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 in cash and kind from local residents who may or may not visit the project but share advice and information on gardening and best practice with them via social media.

During partial school closures they shared outdoor learning activities locally and nationally via social media to encourage families 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 citizens. Their reach extends out from their Westmill base on the Burford Way Allotments to local towns and villages of North Hertfordshire via their social media interactions.

With this funding they will be able to teach local community members to propagate plants at little or no cost at their community allotment. They can encourage them to become more involved in supporting, planning, improving, and maintaining local environments by donating surplus plants. Some of their volunteers are already involved in other green projects which they share e.g. litter picking to encourage others. They 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) and Job Centre to encourage future engagements with the communities they work with.

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

They are an innovative and inclusive group and would like to expand their provision by helping train up other local people within their own projects to not only increase their mental and emotional well-being by working outdoors and learning how to propagate their own plants but to reap the benefits of perhaps developing an entrepreneurial approach as they develop their resilience in these endeavours.

They will continue to develop their own horticulture enterprise by growing surplus seedlings and plants to share and sell on to the local community. They would also like to be able to create new job opportunities by training up their own volunteers to gain the confidence and experience to apply for work in this field.

8.1.2

Applicant Project	Hitchin Allotments Association
	Purchasing a tool store and tools that they can loan out to new allotment tenants.
Sum requested	£800
Total project cost	£1,100
Match funding	£300 Membership fees
Previous support	£930 in 2019
NHDC Policy met	Yes
Council objectives	Be a more welcoming and inclusive Council Build thriving and resilient communities Respond to challenges to the environment

Hitchin has four allotment sites managed by North Herts District Council, in Old Hale Way, Burford Way, Ransom's Rec and Pirton Road, and one newer site in Old Hale Way managed by Herts County Council. The Hitchin Allotments Association has members from all five sites. They liaise with the Councils and represent the allotment holders' interests.

They want to buy a tool store and a good set of tools they can loan out to new allotment tenants. Buying the equipment for an allotment is expensive and can be a block to people taking on and successfully maintaining an allotment.

This is especially so because often plots need a lot of clearance work at the start. Or the tenant has already had to pay out the annual rent of £150 for a whole plot or £75 for a half plot. There are also significant other costs such as for a shed, plants, and equipment

They have often observed that people give up plots early on because these challenges get on top of them despite other plot holders lending things. A tool loan scheme will remove one of these obstacles.

They are wanting to make taking an allotment more accessible to people who may be financially challenged. Tools for loan will also help them when they are doing volunteer gardening to support older or unwell tenants when volunteers come to help them. It means they can supply the tools if needed.

In terms of value for money they have searched online for best prices and have priced up tools which are likely to have a long life, rather than going for the cheapest which

then break quickly. This will benefit new allotment tenants and older or unwell allotment tenants who need support to keep going. Often their allotment is their life and keeps them going. This will benefit all allotment sites across Hitchin.

They will have in place a clean down policy on collection and return of all tools using appropriate wipes and sprays. And this will be explained in the sign out sheet they will use with loanees.

This application supports the first two NHDC objectives, making taking an allotment, with its physical and mental health benefits, more accessible to everyone in the community including those with less disposable income. Also, older people helping them continue to hold on to their allotment giving them a social outlet they would otherwise lack.

They will promote the tool loan using their newsletter, twice a year, and their website. The scheme can be mentioned on the Hitchin Allotment pages of the NHDC website and in the local newspaper. They are happy to run an allotments story in any of the council's publications.

8.1.3

Applicant Project	Letchworth and Hitchin Sea Cadets IT equipment to aid training for the cadets, camping and boating equipment, education, and training events
Sum requested	£1,000
Total project cost	£3,460
Match funding	£1,000 Letchworth Committee £620 Locality budget £840 Fund raising
Previous support NHDC Policy met	£50 in 2016 Yes
Council objectives	Be a more welcoming and inclusive Council Build thriving and resilient communities

Letchworth and Hitchin Sea Cadets offer a range of different activities from sailing, windsurfing and powerboating - to rock climbing, camping, and music - plus, so much more. At Letchworth and Hitchin Sea Cadets, cadets can gain different qualifications that they can take with them once they leave Sea Cadets.

Their aim is to guide young children to become more responsible young adults. Teaching them to be more active in their community through leadership and motivation. Helping them to assist themselves and others around their area making them better future citizens. Helping them to gain national recognised qualifications outside the normal educational remit.

This can be done with the help from the grant by giving them better and more reliable equipment, helping their staff to educate them to a higher standard and more professional level.

The grant will benefit Cadets of Letchworth (10), Hitchin (10) and Baldock (2). Roughly 40 people would directly benefit from the funds as the army cadets would be able to share some of the IT equipment.

This grant is to be split across the Hitchin Committee and the Letchworth Committee (£1,000 each). The rest of the funding will come from Hertfordshire County Councillors' locality budgets.

8.2 Community Team Engagement Update

8.2.1 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.
- Assisting in Charnwood House Open Days.
- Working closely with the Westmill Centre to help them with their MUGA (Multi-Use Games Area) litter/ ASB problems.
- 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 Hitchin Councillors' Surgeries.
- Facilitating virtual Hitchin Town Talks.
- Gathering speakers and information for the Cabinet Panel for Community Engagement and Co-operative Development.
- Continuing to work with, and add to, the Arts Cooperative which was set up after the Hitchin Arts and Culture Town Talk.
- Assisting in the organisation of the Chair's Volunteer Awards and next year's Holocaust Memorial Day Event.
- Working with groups to help them secure funding from the new Health Protection Board Covid Recovery Fund.

8.2.2 Update on Previous Grants Awarded

- Hitchin Festival - The Dell at Woodside
North Herts District Council (NHDC) awarded over £2000 to support the Hitchin Festival following a virtual meeting of its Hitchin Area Committee on 15 June.

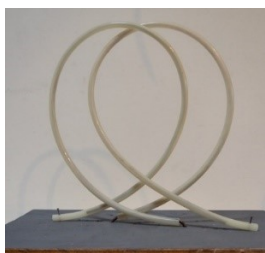
The annual arts festival has been running for the last ten years, bringing together community groups, businesses and individuals. The grant went towards creating a week-long series of events, running from Saturday 24 July to Saturday 31 July, at The Dell Open Air Theatre, next to the Queen Mother Theatre, Woodside.

The funding was used towards the hire of staging and technical equipment and to ensure the space remains safe and secure, with fencing and security present throughout the duration. We have invited Cllr Keith Hoskins and Glyn Doggett, from the Hitchin Festival team, to give us a report on how it went at this Hitchin Committee.



Hitchin Festival - The Dell at Woodside. Before and after.

- Ravidassia Community Centre – update from Suraj Kamal
Work has resumed and the Engagement team have been invited to see the site week commencing September 27th.
- Quaker Meeting House – update from Chris Kell
An update on the Unity Sculpture project – ‘Have raised the £8,000 which would trigger NHDC's grant (agreed last year by Hitchin Committee) for the sculpture in the Peace Garden.’ - Chris Kell - North Herts Interfaith Forum (NHIFF). Evidence to be supplied before the remaining funds are released.



Unity sculpture model photo

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 2021/22.
- 10.2 At the end of the 2020/21 financial year, the carry forward budget was £3,465 of which £2,000 had been allocated to the Peace Garden Sculpture and is due to be released shortly and the remaining £1,465 has been utilised as part of the grant to Hitchin Festival.
- 10.3 The current 2021/22 base budget was £11,000 and £720 has been spent, (being the remainder of the Hitchin Festival grant). This leaves a budget available of **£10,280**.
- 10.4 The grant applications for this meeting total £2,230 and if the Members agree the grants outlined in this report this will leave a balance of £8,050.

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 The grant application for Getting Rooted C.I.C. at ‘Ron’s Plot’ Community Allotment Garden has the potential to create positive environmental implications by promoting people growing their own food and to encourage healthy and sustainable food growing practices. Surplus seedlings and produce are also shared within communities and between local green projects.
- 14.2 The grant application for Hitchin Allotment Association has the potential to create positive environmental implications by promoting people growing their own food and to encourage healthy and sustainable food growing practices. Loaning tools and reducing the need for individuals to each purchase their own tools will also have a positive environmental impact in terms of minimising waste and consumption as less items will need to be bought per person if they are able to be loaned and shared.

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 – 2021/22 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.