

HITCHIN COMMITTEE
November 30th - 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 There are no recommendations for grant funding to put to the Hitchin Committee for consideration at this meeting.
- 2.2 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 There are no Grant Applications for this Hitchin Committee meeting.

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.
 - Meeting about a potential exhibition and celebration of South Asian Heritage Month, 2022.
 - Working closely with the Westmill Centre to help them with their MUGA (Multi-Use Games Area) and ASB problems. JAG meeting attended.

- 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 live Hitchin Councillors' Community Surgeries.
- Updating Councillor Surgery Risk Assessments.
- Facilitating hybrid Hitchin Town Talks.
- 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.
- Assisting in the 'Welcome Back' Shop Local Campaign, Christmas 2021. This is an initiative with government funding for town centre regeneration.
- Meeting about potential ideas and events for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, 2022.
- Working with groups to help them secure funding from the new Health Protection Board Covid Recovery Fund. Grant Panel Meetings have been held throughout November.

8.2.2 Update on Previous Grants Awarded

- North Herts African Caribbean Community group – update from Kava Johnson
North Herts District Council (NHDC) awarded over £4,000 to support the North Herts African Caribbean Community Group from the District Wide budget in October last year.

Under the terms of the grant, after 12 months any unspent funds should be returned to NHDC. As 2020 was not a usual year with the lock downs preventing lots of activities taking place, we were happy to agree to some leeway on this.

We have an update on what has been spent so far and on what activities. We also have an update on how, and what plans, they have to utilise this funding as we approach the new year.

They have been able to bring some of their events online and have postponed the remainder to take place at a time when attending will be safer for the public.

After reviewing the planned events, they, as a committee, decided to postpone *the Gala Dinner Night, the "Black Britons Trail" through Hitchin town centre and Dragons Den style business mentoring event* - due to being unable to safely execute their plans, embedding COVID safety and compliance, while maintaining the opulence and celebrator nature of the events.

They had initially postponed the Mental Health Creative Writing Workshops in the hope that these could be held in person once in late 2021. They have decided to hold these online and are hosting 3 sessions throughout November and December.

We have also planned an event to promote authors of African, Caribbean, and other Black backgrounds which they are calling "The Black Bookcase". They are working in partnership with an event planning social enterprise to deliver this and

they have been quoted for the planning, promotion, and delivery (including speakers etc). This event has been postponed from March 2021 to March 2022 to enable them to manage the expected gathering.

They had also planned some Black History sessions which were going to be delivered online, but they now hope to host in person. They have some speakers lined up, including Michael McMillian the creator of the “West Indian Front Room” exhibition and book.

The MMAP/ PoetsIn Mental Health and Poetry Workshops were well attended and enabled them to work with Stuart Lawrence (activist and the brother of Stephen Lawrence) Jah Digga (MC, Poet and Activist) and spoken word artists Sunny Day, Miss Yankey and JB.

The pandemic has taken a toll on the project, but they have been able to successfully deliver most of the events they had originally planned. They have partnerships lined up and will be expanding their project to celebrate black history, tackle racism and support a collaborative approach to community awareness and social justice in the near future.

- Ravidassia Community Centre – update from Suraj Kamal
They are now in the final weeks to completion, the majority of the work should be complete by the end of November 2021, they have ordered the kitchen canopy hoods and other stainless-steel items. Once they have received the canopy installation they will be actioned straight away.
- Quaker Meeting House – update from Chris Kell
It was explained at the last Hitchin Committee meeting that the next step would be to begin groundwork to install the sculpture. There was a desire to see this progress as soon as possible, especially to get the groundwork dug before the winter months. They are now geared towards January. The person digging the hole says he can't do it before then, but they've started ordering steel for the sculpture. They are on track to have it completed and installed in the new year.

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 The current 2021/22 base budget was £11,000 and £2,950 has been spent. This leaves a budget available of **£8,050**.

10.3 There are no grant applications for consideration at this this meeting leaving a balance of £8,050 available to utilise for the last meeting of the financial year in March 2022.

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 pertinent Environmental implications associated with any items within 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 – 2021/22 financial year budget sheet.

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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.