LETCHWORTH COMMITTEE 8th December 2021

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF REPORT: GRANTS & COMMUNITY UPDATE

REPORT OF: THE POLICY & COMMUNITIES MANAGER

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

CURRENT COUNCIL PRIORITIES: 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 to 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 grant applications to be considered 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 Letchworth.

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.

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. Delay decisions until the Committee meets in person, which is not considered the best option as many community organisations rely on such Grants.

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.

7.2 Members are asked to note the information detailed in Appendix 1. Letchworth Area Committee Budget spreadsheet, 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

8. **RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS** There are no grant applications to be considered at this meeting.

8.1 Community Engagement Update and previous grants awarded

8.2.1 <u>Community Engagement Team</u>

The team have been continuing to engage and network with local community groups and initiatives. This involved:

- Assisting a newly-formed group to support the influx of Hong Kong Chinese British to settle in Letchworth. Helping them to access government funding via Herts County Council and the East of England Local Government Association (EELGA) to cover the cost of English as a second language courses. Attending

a Welcome event held at St Francis School to talk to them about the area and explain about local democracy.

- Working with Letchworth Corner Sports Club to secure Community Facilities Capital Funding of £10,000 to provide adequate ventilation in line with Covid 19 Health and Safety precautions in the shower rooms.

- Working with Mrs Howard Memorial Hall on Community Facilities Capital Funding of £36,000 to replace the boilers serving both the original part of the building and the new extension. The funding has been agreed on condition of the board of trustees signing a full repairing lease for the building with North Hertfordshire District Council.

- 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 celebratory nature of the events.

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

  The group 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/ Poets In 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.

- Processing grants to utilise the £100k Health Protection Board funding to assist the community’s recovery following the Covid 19 Pandemic. Currently 16 grants being processed in this round and we’re now applying for a further £50k for another round. We have a waiting list of five applications.

- Processing and working with Food Provision Groups to distribute the Winter Support grants and the new Household Support Grants, either by direct funding or provision of supermarket vouchers.

- Supporting various local and district wide Network Groups such as Youth Action, Food Provision and the newly formed Arts and Culture Network.

- Continuing to work with, and add to, the Arts Cooperative which was set up after the Hitchin Arts and Culture Town Talk

- 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.

- Gathering speakers and information for the Cabinet Panel for Community Engagement and Co-operative Development.

- Assisting in the organisation of the Chair’s Volunteer Awards and next year’s Holocaust Memorial Day Event.

8.2 <u>Previous Grants Awarded</u>

8.2.1 Norton Green Care: The organisation was awarded funding last year towards the purchase of the portaloo on the allotment site in Norton. Ray Wilson has reported that the project has been running really well this year, with approximately 20 participants using the service on site. The Norton project is specifically for those with special needs, disabilities and mental health issues or are vulnerable for some reason or another. The

toilet has been of real value as it has allowed those with conditions that mean they can not be too far away from toilet facilities can benefit from the project.

Green Care is going from strength to strength this year and are in the process of expanding their services. They have secured another plot of land belonging to Settle which is behind the houses on the Crescent. This will form part of a new social enterprise working with unemployed to grow and sell food.
In addition, they are working in partnership with the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation who have provided Green Care with a further 0.7-acre site at Standalone Farm. They will be creating a farm shop on site that will sell the produce and aim for the project to be totally self-sufficient.

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 Committee budget 2021/22

10.2 The carry over amount from 2020/21 was £4,800. There is an amount of £2,000 allocated (but not spent) to the Wilbury and Ickneild School Parents Association (WISPA). This can be released once they have the relevant permissions to site the portacabin the funding is sought towards.
If this project has not commenced by the next meeting in March 2022 the offer of funding will be withdrawn and the £2,000 put back into the budget to be used for other community grants. The group will be at liberty to reapply.

10.3 The 2020/21 carry over has now been fully allocated but there is the £2000 outstanding waiting to be drawn down for the WISPA portacabin.

10.4 The current balance in the Committee budget available to allocate stands at £7,410. There are no grants to consider at this meeting, therefore this amount will remain to be utilised at the next and final 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 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 – 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