

***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 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 allocating funding from their discretionary community budget towards the projects below.
- 2.2 **£1,500** to Offley Allotment Association towards the installation of running water on the allotment sites as outlined in 8.1.1.
- 2.3 **£441** to Breachwood Green towards a litter picking project in the village and surrounding areas as outlined in 8.1.2.
- 2.4 **£500** to Pirton Sports & Social Club towards a new pump for the hot water system and new covers for the cold-water tanks in the roof space as outlined in 8.1.3.
- 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 Southern Rural.

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 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.
- 7.2 Members are asked to note the information detailed in Appendix 1. Southern Rural Committee Budget spreadsheet, which relates to the Committee budget balances for 2021/22. The spreadsheet also details pre-allocated sums carried forward from the previous financial year, including balances and past expenditure.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

Councillors are at liberty to consider any amount requested in a grant application if the committee has sufficient funds in the 2021/2022 budget.

8.1 Grant Applications

8.1.1

Applicant	Offley Allotment Association (OAA)
Project	Installation of running water on the allotment sites.
Sum requested	£2,150
Total project cost	£5,449
Joint funding	£1,100 Christmas Market £1,000 Offley PC £250 Cllr Barnard HCC Locality Budget £950 S106 via the PC
NHDC Policy met	YES
Council Priorities	Build thriving and resilient communities

This application has been deferred from the last Southern Rural Committee meeting held in October. For full details of the original application please refer to the agenda and minutes for the meeting of 21st October 2021.

<https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=153&MId=2666&Ver=4>

The group originally applied for the full amount of the project cost without additional funding from other sources. There were also concerns regarding the length of the lease agreement with the landowner Pilkington Farms of just 3 years.

Since October, officers and Members have been liaising with the HCC local councillor, Offley Parish Clerk and the OAA to seek additional funds.

In addition, the OAA have been looking to fund a secure gate at the entrance to the site. In November, there was a fly-tipping incident at the entrance which was set alight destroying the wooden gate. The landowner has replaced the gate with a more secure metal gate meaning that the OAA no longer need to figure this into any future expenditure.

The group have met with the landowner to seek agreement that should the site be taken back and used for other purposes other than community allotments the landowner will refund the cost of the installation of mains water to the site.

The group have amended their original application and have requested £2,150. Since they no longer need to also fund a secure entrance the officer recommendation is to provide £1,500 as outlined in 2.2.

8.1.2

Applicant	Breachwood Green
Project	Litter picking equipment.
Sum requested	£441
Total project cost	£916
Joint funding	£100 personal contribution £375 HCC Cllr Barnard Locality Budget
NHDC Policy met	YES
Council Priorities	Build thriving and resilient communities

The Breachwood Green Group were set up last year to coordinate parish wide litter picking, environmental enhancement events and campaign against speeding in the village. The funding they are requesting is to be used for publicity and publications including maintaining their website to advertise for volunteers and advertise events and activities to the local community, Public Liability Insurance, litter picking equipment and health and safety equipment. The litter pick events will take place monthly and as well as improving the local environment also serve to bring local residents together with a common goal which improves community cohesion generally.

The events are advertised by leaflets door to door and via the Parish Council meetings and posters on notice boards in Breachwood Green, Ley Green, parish shop, local pubs and businesses and bus stops.

The group plan to plant 250 trees in spring next year. If they haven't already liaised with the Council's Green Space team to receive trees as part of the Queen's Jubilee year canopy project, the Community Engagement officer will put them in contact.

8.1.3

Applicant	Pirton Sports and Social Club
Project	A new pump for the hot water system and new covers for the cold-water tanks in the roof space.
Sum requested	£500
Total project cost	£820
Match funding	£320 from reserves
NHDC Policy met	Yes
Council objectives	Be a more welcoming and inclusive Council Build thriving and resilient communities

Pirton Sports and Social Club provides sporting and social activities and facilities for residents of Pirton and the surrounding areas and is the hub of sporting activity in the village.

During the pandemic the changing and shower facilities for sports clubs were unused for 15 months and as a result the hot water system now needs a new pump and new covers for the cold-water tanks in the roof space to retain their cleanliness. Currently the showers cannot be used due to the fault that developed in the pump.

All adult football and cricket teams using the clubhouse will benefit from the showers being available again. Almost all the players in the home sides (5 teams) are local to Pirton and Hitchin, whereas visiting teams can be from anywhere in Hertfordshire or Bedfordshire.

8.2 Community Engagement Update

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

- Liaising with colleagues in Planning and Lilley Parish Council to secure S106 funding to purchase and install a defibrillator on the Cassel Memorial Hall
- 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 Recognition Awards and next year's Holocaust Memorial Day event.

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 current balance available in the budget to allocate at this meeting is £5,440. The total amount of funding requested adds up to £2,441. If the Committee agree the level of funding as outlined in the recommendations this will leave an amount of **£2,999** to utilise at 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 Environmental Impact Assessment has been undertaken. The application for Offley Allotment and the related actions have been considered and on balance it is likely that positive environmental impacts will outweigh and outnumber any negative impacts. The allotment makes good use of water butts to collect rainwater, and this will remain their preferred water source. However, drier spells mean that there is a need for a supplementary water source on-site. An onsite source can help to reduce the journeys made by car to the allotment as there will no longer be a need to transport water from home. It is therefore suggested to proceed with ‘No major change’ to the actions. Please see the attached Environmental Impact Assessment for further information.

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