

**HITCHIN COMMITTEE
6 MARCH 2018**

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

AGENDA ITEM No.

7

TITLE OF REPORT: GRANTS & COMMUNITY UPDATE

REPORT OF THE COMMUNITIES MANAGER

EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND RURAL AFFAIRS

PRIORITY: ATTRACTIVE AND THRIVING / PROSPER AND PROTECT / RESPONSIVE AND EFFICIENT

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To advise the Committee on the current expenditure and balances of the Area Committee budgets.
- 1.2 To bring to the Committee's attention details of recent requests received for Area Committee Grant Funding, made by community groups and local organisations, which conform to the Authority's Grants Policy approved by Cabinet on June 14th 2016.
- 1.3 To advise the Committee of the activities and schemes with which the Community Officer has been involved.
- 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 considers allocating funding from their discretionary community budget towards the projects below:
 - 2.1.1 £4,964 to Tilehouse Counselling Service as outlined in 8.1.1
 - 2.1.2 £2,850 to the Triangle Community Garden, as outlined in 8.1.2
 - 2.1.3 That any unspent funds from the 2017/18 financial year be allocated to Community Initiatives.
- 2.2 That the Committee endorses the actions taken by the Community Officer to promote greater community capacity and well-being for Hitchin.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To ensure the Committee is kept informed of the work of the Community Officer.
- 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 June 2016.
- 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 Corporate 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 with regard to funding proposals for Area 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 Members are asked to note the information detailed in Appendix A Hitchin Area Committee Budget Spread sheet, which relates to the Area Committee budget balances for 2017/18.
- 7.2 The spreadsheet also details pre-allocated sums carried forward from the previous financial years, including balances and past expenditure relating to the allocated and unallocated Area Capital Visioning Budgets available to the Committee.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

8.1 Grant Applications

8.1.1 Tilehouse Counselling Service

Tilehouse Counselling is a charity that provides professional counselling in Hitchin and North Herts, working strictly within The British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) ethical framework. The Centre provides reduced cost services to those most in need and aims to reduce emotional suffering and enable people to make positive changes in their lives. The service costs approximately £400k per annum to run and they receive funding from the Big Lottery, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, funding bids from various trusts and foundations as well as contributions from clients and general fund raising events.

The centre is planning to cover costs for new Individual counselling sessions for individuals with mental health issues, by offering weekly one to one sessions. The organisation is seeking a total of £4,964 towards running these sessions.

Those Individuals receiving the weekly, professional counselling sessions will benefit as this will help them to move forward more positively in their lives. By improving the emotional health of individuals there will be a knock on effect benefitting families and the wider community, improving the emotional health of local residents enabling them to be more productive members of the community.

Tilehouse Counselling Service last received funding from Hitchin Committee in 2003 when they received £1000.

8.1.2 Triangle Community Garden

Triangle Community Garden is a registered charity that provides Social Therapeutic Horticultural activities for adults with learning disabilities, as well as supporting individuals to lead a more active healthy lifestyle through learning about nutrition, cooking, growing fruit and vegetables and exercise.

The Triangle Community Garden are requesting £2,850 towards the purchase of IT equipment, a mobile phone, internal redecoration and Wi-Fi for Ransom's Pavilion, that will cost in total £4,580. This in turn will extend the opportunities available to the service users of its learning disability projects by providing access to IT equipment.

This will improve the attractiveness to hirers and make it more compliant for visually impaired users, and extend the opportunities available to community and school groups who make educational visits to the Triangle Community Garden. The group are making in-kind contribution in terms of volunteer labour costs of £1,112.00 and they have also received funding of £618 from County Councillor Judi Billing's Locality Budget.

The group last received funding in 2010 to a value of £446.

8.2 Update on Community Engagement

8.2.1 Hitchin Stroke Group

Following their grant award by the Hitchin Committee in December, the Communities Officer set up a meeting with the Stroke Group volunteers, the North Herts Centre for Voluntary Services (NHCVS) and Hitchin Rotarians.

The NHCVS assisted with a push on recruitment for more volunteers to help with the group each week. Three good quality volunteers have come forward to hopefully work with the group.

The Hitchin Rotarians have offered in-kind contribution of professionally designed and printing of new leaflets and posters to advertise the group. They also have links in GP surgeries across the town where these materials can be displayed.

8.2.2 Oughton Children's Centre – Pre-school learning alliance

The Communities Officer assisted the Adult Learning co-ordinator at the Children's Centre to raise £700 from the Hitchin County Councillor's locality budgets to cover the cost of Wellbeing courses aimed at lone parents and parents from deprived families from across the town. The course helps to build self esteem and confidence through making home made natural cosmetics and chocolates. The course aims to target those most in need that generally do not access the services at the Children's Centre. Through these workshops the Children's Centre will be; supporting individuals to be part of a learning community, breaking down the barriers that stop people from achieving their full potential, making individuals feel valued as a member of their community and reducing poverty by providing individuals with wellbeing, learning and employability support.

The group originally submitted an application to the Hitchin Area Committee but following the generosity of the County Councillors that application has been deferred. This workshop will act as a pilot scheme. It has worked well in other areas of Hertfordshire and if it is successful in Hitchin they may come back to Committee later in the year to fund a follow up workshop and the course may also be extended to other areas in the District.

8.2.3 Clean up Hitchin

Clean up Hitchin work to raise awareness of the importance of looking after the local environment, by challenging and changing the behaviour of people who drop litter in Hitchin and by raising awareness of the issues in collaborative, innovative and colourful ways that earn the attention and support of the community. The aim is to slowly shift perspectives and behaviour over time, slowly but surely having a positive impact on the town.

Clean up Hitchin are looking to film what's in the Hiz, which will film clearing the balancing tanks at St Marys to find out what rubbish has made it to the bottom of the waterway, which will be called "For Ducks Sake". Clean up Hitchin was requesting £500 to cover some of cost for the filming and editing, also to cover the cost of the website which will pay for the domain and the hosting. Unfortunately the application was not compliant with current criteria as the group received funding last year from Hitchin Committee towards the Art Binstallation project.

At present, Clean up Hitchin are working with Hitchin Girls School to educate pupils about the environment and are looking for some funding to deliver smaller projects into the schools to continue to discuss the importance of the environment.

8.2.4 Community Facilities

The Communities Team have been working with both St Michaels and Walsworth Communities Centre on grant applications for capital funding needed for renovations to both buildings. This funding has now been allocated from the Community Facilities Grant Fund on condition of lease agreements being finalised. The lease agreements are in the final stages of legal agreement between the Community centres solicitor and the NHDC legal department and the funding will be released in the immediate future.

The Communities Officer is also working with the Walsworth Community Centre's fund raising sub-committee to advise them on fundraising activities generally and potential match funding streams.

The North Herts Minority Ethnic Forum has submitted an application for a Community Facilities Capital Grant in order to extend their building on Whinbush Road. The Panel agreed to recommend the grant in principle with some conditions that will need to be met by the organisation prior to the release of any funds.

The Hitchin Education Foundation also submitted an application for Capital Funding to renovate and bring back into use the former Scout Hut adjacent to Hitchin Boys School grounds on Bancroft. The Panel requested to see a clearer business case from the organisation prior to any funding being released but agreed in principle that an additional community venue in the centre of Hitchin would be beneficial.

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 Section 9.8.2 (g) of Constitution in respect of Area Committees' Terms of Reference provides 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". The Area Committees also have delegated power under section 9.8.1 (a) & (b) to allocate discretionary budgets and devolved budgets within the terms determined by the Council and outlined in the current Grant Policy agreed by Cabinet in June 2016.

9.2 Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 provides a General Power of Competence which gives local authorities the powers to do anything:-

- An individual may generally do
- Anywhere in the UK or elsewhere
- For a commercial purpose or otherwise, for a charge or without a charge
- Without the need to demonstrate that it will benefit the authority, its area or person's resident or present in its area.

- 9.3 Section 137 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 2017/18:-
The agreed budget for this financial year is £19,600. In addition to £17,800 carried forward from 2016/17 equates to a total amount of £34,900 for the provision of Community Development Grants. All carry over amounts have now been either spent or allocated. A total of £655 has been spent from the 2017/18 budget leaving £18,945 available to allocate.
- 10.2 Should Members be minded to provide grant funding as requested under recommendation 2.1 the total awarded will equate to £7,814. This would leave an amount of £11,131 to allocate prior to the end of the financial year.
- 10.3 The Capital Visioning funds are now all been drawn down and utilised for redevelopment projects in Bancroft Gardens.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 There are no relevant risk entries that have been recorded on Pentana Performance, 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" policy do not apply to this report.

14. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1 There are no pertinent Human Resource implications associated with any items within this report.

15. APPENDICES

- 15.1 Appendix A - 2017/18 financial year budget sheet

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17. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 17.1 Review of Policies and Procedures for Financial Assistance to Voluntary and Community Organisations, November 2002.
- 17.2 Review of Grant Policy Cabinet June 2016