

SOUTHERN RURAL COMMITTEE 30 June 2022

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF REPORT: GRANTS & COMMUNITY UPDATE

REPORT OF: THE POLICY & COMMUNITIES MANAGER

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

CURRENT COUNCIL PRIORITIES: PEOPLE FIRST, SUSTAINABILITY, A BRIGHTER FUTURE TOGETHER

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 **£1,211** to Holwell Parish Council towards chairs, tables, cooker and fridge/freezer for new Pavilion as outlined in 8.1.1.
- 2.3 **£569** to River Hiz Conservation Group towards conservation work of Ickleford's Chalk Stream as outlined in 8.1.2.
- 2.4 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, during 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 Area Committee Budget spreadsheet, which relates to the Committee budget balances for 2022/23. 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 2022/2023 budget.

8.1 Grant Applications

8.1.1

Applicant	Holwell Parish Council
Project	Tables, chairs, cooker and fridge/freezer for new pavilion
Sum requested	£1,211
Total project cost	£1,710.36
Match funding	£500 Parish Precept
Previous support	2020: £744 for noticeboard from NHC Community Grant 2016: £200 for noticeboards from NHC Community Grant Currently receiving a capital grant of £50,000 towards Pavilion.
NHDC Policy met	Yes
Council objectives	People First

8.1.2 Holwell Parish Council are responsible for maintaining services for the village, recreation ground, play area, hedge and tree cutting and litter picking. They also maintain noticeboards and public buildings.

8.1.3 They are asking for funding towards tables, chairs, cooker and fridge/freezer for the new pavilion.

8.1.4 They predict that the Pavilion will be used by a number of clubs and already have a cricket club and youth football teams that wish to make use of the venue. They hope the pavilion will also be used by the Mother and Toddlers Group as the pavilion is on the recreation ground and a safe environment for play. Other clubs they hope will use the facility are youth clubs, book clubs, children's parties, exercise clubs etc.

8.1.5 The village does not have a centre as such, so the new pavilion will provide a warm and welcoming place to play and meet up with others in the village, something which was not possible in the old delapidated pavilion as it did not have heating and a safe and clean environment. The Parish Council also intend to hold their Parish Council meetings there.

8.1.6

Applicant	River Hiz Conservation Group (RHCG)
Project	Conservation of Ickleford's Chalk Streams
Sum requested	£569
Total project cost	£1,555
Match funding	£706.05 Parish Council £100 Farmer Landowner £30 resident £150 pending from Ickleford Common Holders
Previous support	2021: £2000 NHC Pump Priming Grant
NHDC Policy met	Yes
Council objectives	People First Sustainability

8.1.7 The aims and activities of the RHCG are:

- To maintain and improve the river quality and habitats to protect the associated rare flora and fauna.
- To include Ickleford's Chalk Stream as a village amenity now and for future generations, informing and involving the local community in projects.
- Providing ways to enable residents to share and report incidents of pollution.
- Sharing with local agencies re: saving water and enhancing the local environment.

8.1.8 The group follow the River Hiz Restoration Plan as set out by the Living Rivers Officer of the Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust. There are only about 200 chalk streams in the whole world. 85% of them are in Southern England and North Herts have three, which join up to make the River Hiz which flows through Ickleford. The group has joined the Chalk Aquifer Alliance to share information and lectures with other groups that are working to protect Hertfordshire's chalk streams throughout the country and beyond.

8.1.9 RHCG are asking for funding towards carrying out ongoing seasonal projects throughout the year/s relating to the River Hiz and its tributaries within Ickleford parish. For this they need to pay for:

- Required trained supervision of river projects, i.e. licenced chainsaw user, trained First Aider (including Covid precautions), Wildlife Trust expertise. Annual Public Liability insurance for all projects
- Materials for riverbank protection.
- Additional equipment for volunteers to enable river-related projects.

8.1.10 Projects are defined by the time of year and must consider the nesting season (birds, other animals, fish spawning). Invasive plant species removal is seasonal. See Appendix 2 for their calendar of Conservation Activities.



Photographs taken by Assistant Community Engagement Officer when visiting in April.

8.2 Community Engagement Update and previous grants awarded

8.2.1 Community Engagement Team

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

- Contacting Parish Councils in Southern Rural Area to gauge interest in creating a forum to meet quarterly on zoom to discuss issues and challenges.
- Processing grants to utilise the Health Protection Board funding to assist the community's recovery following the Covid 19 Pandemic.
- Supporting various local and district wide Network Groups such as Youth Action, Food Provision, Arts and Culture and the newly resurrected Green and Growing Group.
- Continuing to work with, and add to, the Arts Cooperative which was set up after the Arts and Culture Cabinet Panel meeting.

- 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.

8.2.3 Update on Previous Grants Awarded

8.2.4 Down the Woods CIC – update from Caroline Langley

North Herts Council awarded £890 in March 2021 to support Down the Woods with costs towards Forest School-type sessions for adults - "We had an amazing time with our adults on their Forest School sessions. The 8 participants enjoyed learning how to identify trees and plants and creating a soothing balm with a plant called plantain. They learnt to light fires and cook over a campfire resulting in a jacket potato feast! We worked on crafting with nature making pens and keyrings. Then enjoyed the quiet and still of the forest with some guided meditation."



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 July 2021. 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 1. Southern Rural Area Committee budget 2022/23
- 10.2 The current 2022/23 base budget is **£8,700**, with **£222** carried forward from the 2021/22 budget. This leaves a budget available of **£8,922**.
- 10.3 The grant applications for this meeting total **£1,780** and if the Members agree the grants outlined in this report this will leave a balance of **£7,142**.

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 River Hiz Conservation Group and the related actions have been considered and on balance it is likely that positive environmental impacts will outweigh and outnumber any negative impacts. Improving river quality and habitats will help to protect associated rare flora and fauna which will have a positive effect on the environment. It is therefore suggested to proceed with ‘No major change’ to the actions. Please see the attached Appendix 3. 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 – Appendix 1 SR Area Committee budget sheet 22-23
Appendix 2 – Appendix 2 RHCG Calendar of Conservation Activities
Appendix 3 – Appendix 3 River Hiz Conservation Group Environmental Impact Assessment

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

17.1 Author:

17.1.1 Aimee Flack, Assistant Community Engagement Officer
Email: aimee.flack@north-herts.gov.uk ext. 4274

17.2 Contributors:

17.2.1 Claire Morgan, Community Engagement Team Leader
Email: Claire.morgan@north-herts.gov.uk ext. 4226

17.2.2 Reuben Ayavoo, Policy & Communities Manager
Email: reuben.ayavoo@north-herts.gov.uk ext. 4212

17.2.3 Georgina Chapman, Policy Officer
Email: Georgina.Chapman@north-herts.gov.uk ext. 4121

17.2.4 Anne Miller, Assistant Accountant
Email: Anne.Miller@north-herts.gov.uk ext. 4374

17.2.5 Yvette Roberts, Legal Officer
Email: Yvette.roberts@north-herts.gov.uk ext. 4310

17.2.6 Laura Bignell, Acting Human Resources Operations Manager
Email: Laura.Bignell@north-herts.gov.uk ext. 4347

17.2.7 Tim Everitt, Performance & Risk Officer
Email: tim.everitt@north-herts.gov.uk ext. 4646

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 July 2021.