

***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 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 That the Committee considers allocating funding from their discretionary community budget towards the projects below:
- 2.2 **£1,340** to Imajica Theatre Company CIC towards their Community Panto 2023 project as outlined in paragraph 8.1.1-8.1.14 of the officer's report.
- 2.3 **£920** to NCT North Herts towards funding for their breastfeeding and postnatal support group as outlined in 8.1.15-8.1.22 of the officer's report.
- 2.4 **£1,000** to The Letchworth Centre for Healthy Living to help fund the cost of a railing for the disability ramp they have constructed to provide access to their classroom building as outlined in 8.1.23-8.1.28 of the officer's report.
- 2.5 **£3,400** to Nova Wellness CIC for help bringing Holistic Well-Being Therapy Events to Letchworth as outlined in 8.1.29-8.1.39 of the officer's report.

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| <p>2.6 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.</p> |
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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 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 July 2021.
- 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. Letchworth Area Committee Budget spreadsheet, which relates to the Area Committee budget balances for 2022/23. 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 Letchworth area committee has sufficient funds in the 2022/2023 budget.

8.1 Grant Applications

8.1.1

Applicant	Imajica Theatre Company CIC
Project	Community Panto project
Sum requested	£1,340
Total project cost	£5,930
Match funding	£490 Go Fund Me fundraiser £3,000 Ticket Sales £450 Sponsorship £650 Support in kind from Imajica Theatre
Previous support	Yes, £2,500 in 2021
NHDC Policy met	Yes
Council objectives	People First A Brighter Future Together

8.1.2 Imajica Theatre creates interactive immersive musicals, interactive musical storytelling, performing arts workshops and theatre in education programmes written with younger audiences in mind but enjoyed by all ages.

8.1.3 As specialists in relaxed theatre, they adopt a multi-sensory approach to performances. The group use British Sign Language in their choreographies and help develop important life skills in young people which they transpose in everyday life. Inspiring a strong sense of self-worth, creating a sense of belonging in their community and promoting an *I can do it* and *I am good enough* attitude in young people.

8.1.4 There will be 10 performances, over five days, of their brand-new Christmas Musical show 'Rosie Reindeer and the Christmas Wish' which brings to life a story book that they have written.

8.1.5 All performances will be relaxed theatre, immersive and interactive and include the use of Sign Supported English in their choreography using BSL signs.

8.1.6 The funding provided will be used to provide 50 free tickets per performance to families on low incomes and with SEND needs (500 in total), providing access to professional theatre in the community to those who might otherwise not have access. Each

performance will last approx. 45 minutes, with no interval and there will be two performances per venue.

- 8.1.7 Following on from successful performances for the Jubilee they are booking the following venues: Wilbury Hall or Letchworth and Baldock Scouts HQ, The Grange Community Centre, Jackmans Community Centre, Mrs Howard Hall and The Cloisters or Letchworth Parish Hall.
- 8.1.8 This year's touring option means they can increase the number of performances from five to 10 and visit five different venues in Letchworth in the month of December to widen their audience outreach. This means that their offer of free tickets to families in need should have a higher outreach and help to bring local communities together.
- 8.1.9 The touring option also means that they can add more date options as at St Chris they are restricted to the dates available after the school closes. This will widen the audience numbers due to more options being available. Also using community venues provides the opportunity to add in an additional performance so they have three rather than two if the demand is there.
- 8.1.10 Their performances show good value for money as they provide a full service with tech, actors, admin, graphic design and publicity all done in house due to them increasing their skill set during covid. This ensures that they can support their artistic team by providing additional work for them and upskilling their team of local community artists. The administration of the project will be an in-kind element of this project from Imajica Theatre and front of house/tuckshop is run by the Letchworth and Baldock Scouts as a fundraiser for the five young scouts who are fundraising to go to the 25th Scouts Jubilee in Korea in 2023.
- 8.1.11 This project will benefit local families with the production being the only professional performance in North Herts that is written for the younger audience and for the SEND audience.
- 8.1.12 Due to the high rising costs of living they will be providing an additional service to the local community; many families will find attending events and creating magical memories a challenge.
- 8.1.13 This project will predominantly benefit residents of Letchworth but will be opened out to the residents of the surrounding towns and villages. The complementary family passes will be provided to 500 Letchworth residents (100 tickets per venue) and the group anticipate 80% of the audience will be residents of North Herts with a few extended family members attending whilst visiting the area. A fully sold-out tour would mean 1,000 people visiting one of their performances this year.
- 8.1.14 They will run a digital marketing campaign and print posters and flyers to be given out at local events and via their local community group contacts. Those who applied before will be given the opportunity to apply for the comp tickets again. They will promote by their contacts at the Best Before Café and the Wilbury Community Café.

8.1.15

Applicant	NCT North Herts
Project	Breastfeeding and postnatal support group
Sum requested	£920
Total project cost	£920
Match funding	None
Previous support	None
NHDC Policy met	Yes
Council objectives	People First A Brighter Future Together

8.1.16 NCT North Herts would like to apply for funding for their breastfeeding and postnatal support group, Letchworth Bumps and Babies at Letchworth Baby Cafe, which takes place every 1st and 3rd week on a Tuesday in Letchworth. Each session runs from 10.30-11.45am, at Mrs Howard Memorial Hall, and the sessions run throughout the year, even during the school holidays.

8.1.17 Each group is run by an NCT qualified breastfeeding counsellor, who is paid, not a volunteer. It is free of charge and is open to everyone who wishes to attend. The groups provide vital support to new mums and dads who may be experiencing feeding issues with their babies, but also offers parents a social situation in which to meet others and discuss any post-natal issues. Attending a group can often help a new mum to breastfeed for significantly longer than they might have without their support, or to feel less isolated.

8.1.18 The sessions are not new, they have been running an infant feeding session first in Baldock now in Hitchin for a number of years, including virtually during lockdowns. Each session costs the branch money – as they must cover the cost of the breastfeeding counsellor and room hire. Usually, they cover these costs via donations and fundraising, however as they have been unable to fundraise for the past two years due to the pandemic and restrictions on fundraising, their reserves have become significantly depleted.

8.1.19 Their first aid courses, a good source of income for the branch, re-started in July, and they managed to run a successful Nearly New Sale this March, with a second planned for October. These fundraising events will help increase their reserves but securing funding for these vital infant feeding sessions for the next year will enable them to rebuild reserves to secure the future of the sessions once the funding has been spent.

8.1.20 All local breastfeeding support provided locally is done so free of charge. New parents, particularly breastfeeding mums will benefit from this activity. They know there is a need, as this is an already established activity that is attended regularly by new parents. Since they began this group in Letchworth approximately 50 new parents have attended the group, with an average of 6-8 parents each session.

8.1.21 They let the local community know about their sessions in the following ways:

- Through their antenatal class teachers
- Via Facebook
- Via their email newsletter, which gets sent to around 1,300 people
- Via the Health visitors/family centres
- Via events they hold throughout the year

8.1.22 Their infant feeding support group meets the Council Objectives of 'People first' and 'A brighter future together', as they recognise the importance of supporting new parents and families from the very start, offering support to help babies thrive, and putting families at the heart of what they do.

8.1.23

Applicant Project	The Letchworth Centre for Healthy Living Railing for the disability ramp they have constructed to provide access to their classroom building.
Sum requested	£1,000
Total project cost	£5,500
Match funding	£500 The Valiant Charitable Trust £1,000 Approaching the Hitchin Area Committee £3,000 Fund-raising events
Previous support NHDC Policy met Council objectives	£5,000 Covid support fund in 2020 Yes People First A Brighter Future Together

8.1.24 The Letchworth Centre for Healthy Living provide wellbeing classes for all ages; a counselling service; a complementary therapy clinic; a service addressing children's, young people's and teachers' mental health and wellbeing which delivers Mindfulness programmes to schools; a wellbeing programme aimed at older people with mobility problems or who are living with long-term conditions; and an NHS-commissioned Health and Wellbeing Coaching Service for people with low level anxiety and depressive conditions.

8.1.25 They are seeking funding for a railing for the disability ramp they have constructed to provide access to their classroom building, which houses their three classrooms and their café. They are also approaching the Hitchin Area Committee for £1,000. The handrail will be erected outside the Sadie building which forms part of 'The Letchworth Centre for Healthy Living' – see below.



8.1.26 This rail will benefit anyone who has difficulty mounting steps. People with mobility problems; wheelchair users; mothers with pushchairs will benefit by being able to access the building, and the wellbeing activities which they run inside. The ramp as it stands, with no railings at its side, moreover, presents a safety hazard to any Centre user. They will seek the remaining funding from their own users and from fund-raising events; from local supermarkets which have generously funded them in the past; and from several grant-making trusts that fund small capital projects such as this one.

8.1.27 They have had to construct the ramp to conform with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 in terms of catering for all to ensure the Centre is inclusive in its practice, ultimately providing equity at all times for ‘customers’. The grant they originally received covered the cost of the construction of the ramp and the labour to erect a railing – but not the railing itself. The classrooms are in regular use by participants in their classes, and clients of the café.

8.1.28 The project meets two of the Council’s three priorities: ‘People first’ and ‘A brighter future together’. Support for their work would clearly demonstrate that the Council looks after its population in providing for the needs of disabled people as well as ensuring the safety of others. Equally, in enabling people of all abilities to access the wellbeing programmes the Centre provides, the Council would be helping to ensure that the people of North Herts are able to partake in health-improving activities and thereby create a brighter future for themselves and their children.

8.1.29

Applicant Project	Nova Wellness CIC Funding to bring Holistic Well-Being Therapy Events to Letchworth.
Sum requested	£3,400
Total project cost	£3,970
Match funding	£330 Contributions from Nova Wellness CIC: income from trading or equivalent in voluntary participation of therapists. £240 Venue rental to be covered by Carers in Herts

Previous support	Yes, £1,000 in 2022 from the Baldock & District Committee for Therapy events.
NHDC Policy met	Yes
Council objectives	People First A Brighter Future Together

- 8.1.30 The Nova Wellness CIC provides holistic therapies and treatments to improve the well-being of their community members. Some therapies are provided on an individual basis, with others in a group setting. Group activities offered include guided relaxation, yoga, meditation, trauma, and tension release exercises and more. The individual well-being therapies include: wellness acupuncture, reflexology, reiki, feel-good massage and TRE – trauma/tension release therapy. They also offer chiropractic and Chinese and Western acupuncture at their clinic.
- 8.1.31 They would like to apply for funding to bring Holistic Well-Being Therapy Events to Letchworth, following the amazing feedback and positive interest they have had over the last few months. They have already delivered several well-being events at the Letchworth Create Community Hub and at the Letchworth Community Café, where they delivered taster well-being holistic therapies. Any further events would be open to as many residents as possible with priority given to those referred by local community organisations they have worked with, especially the unpaid carers, who provide a huge service to the community and are saving the NHS millions of pounds each year.
- 8.1.32 The events will focus on holistic therapies such as guided relaxation, yoga, well-being acupuncture, sound bowl therapy and other relaxing and engaging therapies. The funding will cover the cost of up to four well-being events for between 12 to 20 people in each (depending on the size of the venue available). There will be a minimum of two therapists and one support staff member at each of the events, as well as supporting admin staff at the clinic. It will also cover the cost of the therapists at a further three informal events (such as at the Wilbury Community Café), where they will offer taster therapies and promote health and well-being to community members attending the event.
- 8.1.33 The format of the group well-being sessions will be one hour of group therapy such as guided relaxation and one hour of other therapies demonstrations, tasters, and short treatments, for example acupuncture, sound bowls, relaxing massage tasters and other. Their therapists will be on site an hour prior to the event for set up and to welcome the clients arriving to the session.
- 8.1.34 Nova Wellness feel these events will support those in need including carers who look after members of their family or who care for others, to have quality time out for themselves and to help recharge their batteries. This is vital especially after the covid pandemic as many have been totally isolated and unable to come together with other social activities during the past two years. This will uplift their confidence and their health and well-being going forward.

- 8.1.35 They have recently provided several well-being sessions at the Create Community Hub in Station Road Letchworth, which were very well-received, and they've had a lot of requests since then to bring them back to Letchworth, as residents there are often unable to travel to Stevenage, where they are based. They have also attended (on voluntary unpaid basis) and provided well-being therapies at the Wilbury Community Café. The two sessions there generated so much interest and positive feedback that they believe that these events would also benefit the local community especially those who would otherwise not have access to or be able to afford these therapies.
- 8.1.36 At least 60 Letchworth residents and other North Herts residents, including carers and disadvantaged community members will benefit from these sessions. Each participant will be able to attend more than one session, depending on the demand and their requirements. Create Communities Hub, Station Road, Letchworth (or other similar venue type, if chosen venue unavailable). Wilbury Community Café or similar community gathering. Dates and times to be confirmed if funding is secured.
- 8.1.37 They have already established links with Create Communities CIC, Wilbury Community Café, Carers in Herts along with other community organisations in the area who already have established marketing platforms. They would also approach other Letchworth organisations about these events and ask them to refer any clients they feel would benefit. Over the course of last year, they have delivered therapies to many Letchworth residents, who are looking forward to attending any future well-being events if they can secure the funding.
- 8.1.38 They hope to support community members, to cope better with day-to-day pressures they are experiencing in their lives, as well as to help improve their emotional health and well-being. Additionally, their events will become a platform for social interaction. This is relevant especially now in the aftermath of the covid pandemic.
- 8.1.39 Nova Wellness has been advised by the Community Engagement Team that the full funding amount requested may not be possible due to the budget available to the Committee which needs to cater for further grant applications at the two remaining meetings of the financial year in December 22 and March 23 respectively.

8.2 Community Engagement Update and previous grants awarded

8.2.1 Community Engagement Team

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

- 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, the Arts and Culture Network and the newly resurrected Jackmans Network Group and Grange Network Group.
- Facilitating the NHC Letchworth Councillors' Community Surgeries.
- Continuing to work with, and add to, the Arts Cooperative which was set up after the Arts and Culture Cabinet Panel meeting.
- As part of a webinar for North Herts CVS, we are putting together a short online presentation to highlight local support available for Ukrainian refugees, available from 14th September.
- 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.
- Attending JAG (Joint Action Group) and SAG (Safety Advisory Group) meetings to pass on and share information.
- Gathering speakers and information for the Cabinet Panel for Community Engagement and Co-operative Development.
- To celebrate Local Democracy Week and Parliament Week in October/November the team are developing youth democracy activities for Primary School Children Keystage 2.

8.2.2 Update on Previous Grants Awarded

- **Green Care at Norton CIC** – update from Ray Wilson, Director at Green Care at Norton. North Herts Council (NHC) awarded £1,050 to support towards equipment for their new social enterprise based at Standalone Farm – “We are very grateful to have been awarded such a generous grant from North Herts Council's Letchworth Committee which will help us to purchase much needed essential equipment helping us to establish our additional not-for-profit social enterprise growing fruit, vegetables and cut flowers at Standalone Farm.”



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. Letchworth Area Committee Budget spreadsheet.
- 10.2 The 2022/23 base budget was **£11,000**, with **£956** carried forward from the 2021/22 budget. **£2,050** was granted at the last Committee meeting. This leaves a budget available of **£9,906**.
- 10.3 The grant applications for this meeting total **£6,660** and if the Members agree the grants outlined in this report this will leave a balance of **£3,246**.

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. As noted at section 8.2.2, Green Care at Norton will provide long-term support to vulnerable and socially excluded local residents to overcome social exclusion through loneliness, isolation and mental health issues, which will advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations for the participants.

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. Letchworth Area Committee Budget spreadsheet

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

17.1 Author: Danny Pearson, Assistant Community Engagement Officer
Email: Danny.Pearson@north-herts.gov.uk ext. 4209

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

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

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

Rebecca Webb, HR Services Manager
Email: Rebecca.Webb@north-herts.gov.uk ext. 4481

Nurainatta Katevu, Legal Regulatory Team Manager and DMO
Email: Nurainatta.katevu@north-herts.gov.uk ext. 4364

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

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

Alice Sims, Trainee Policy Officer
Email: alice.sims@north-herts.gov.uk ext. 4220

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.