

**\*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 **£920** to NCT (National Childbirth Trust) North Herts towards funding for their breastfeeding and postnatal support group as outlined in 8.1.1-8.1.8 of the officer's report.
- 2.3 **£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 8.1.9-8.1.14 of the officer's report.
- 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 Hitchin.

### **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. 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. Hitchin 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 Hitchin area committee has sufficient funds in the 2022/2023 budget.

8.1 **Grant Applications**

8.1.1

<b>Applicant</b>	<b>NCT (National Childbirth Trust) North Herts</b>
<b>Project</b>	Breastfeeding and postnatal support group
<b>Sum requested</b>	<b>£920</b>
<b>Total project cost</b>	<b>£920</b>
<b>Match funding</b>	None
<b>Previous support</b>	None
<b>NHDC Policy met</b>	Yes
<b>Council objectives</b>	<b>People First</b> <b>A Brighter Future Together</b>

8.1.2 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 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> 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.

8.1.3 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.

8.1.4 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.

8.1.5 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.

8.1.6 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.

8.1.7 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

8.1.8 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.

8.1.9

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

8.1.10 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.

8.1.11 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 have also approached the Letchworth 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.



- 8.1.12 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.
- 8.1.13 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.
- 8.1.14 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.

## **8.2 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. Some of that (HPB) funding was awarded to PoetsIN. They received £15,022 for delivery of a portfolio of creative and proven programmes, wellbeing workshops and mentoring, supporting people with mental health issues living in North Hertfordshire.
- Facilitating the NHC Hitchin Councillors' Community Surgeries. Also exploring the idea of themed Town Talks moving forward.
- Supporting various local and district wide Network Groups such as Youth Action, Food Provision, the Arts and Culture Network and the Westmill Network Group. Also, working more closely with North Herts Youth Strategy Partnership Group.
- Working with local groups who are looking after refugees and presenting at a Ukrainian refugee webinar presentation hosted by North Herts CVS.
- Ideas sent to NHC Commercial and Town Hall Team. Celebrating 50 years since Bob Marley and the Wailers played Hitchin Town Hall (1973). For 2023 we may be able to hold a tribute concert on Friday, May 19<sup>th</sup>, 50 years to the date. Also exploring the idea of a Hitchin Blue Plaque.
- 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.
- To celebrate Local Democracy Week and Parliament Week in October/November the team are developing youth democracy activities for Primary School Children Keystage 2. Councillors and members of the team will visit schools for Q&A sessions.
- Gathering speakers and information for the Cabinet Panel for Community Engagement and Co-operative Development. The theme of the next talk is going to be on the 'Cost of Living Crisis'.
- Finding suitable locations for people who wished to watch the Queen's funeral with others.
- Continued work on bringing a 'Snowman Trail' to North Herts, Hitchin. Snowman sculpture destinations have been picked (working closely with *Wild in Art*, *Hitchin Bid* and *Cala Homes*).

## 8.2.2 Update on Previous Grants Awarded

- **'Home is where the Hert is' exhibition – update**

The exhibition was shown at North Hertfordshire Museum. It proved so popular that it had an extension into September.



'Home is Where the Hert is: Stories from Hertfordshire's British South Asian Community' is an exhibition and documentary featuring local British South Asians and how they challenged conventions of what it means to be brown in a small English town.

Currently investigating to see if this exhibition can be taken on tour to another venue in Hitchin, to bring this out to members of the community who did not get the chance to see it at the North Herts Museum.

## 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. Hitchin Area Committee Budget spreadsheet.
- 10.2 The current 2022/23 base budget is **£11,000**, with **£775** carried forward from the 2021/22 budget. The money paid out at the last Hitchin Area Committee meeting was **£3,135**. This leaves a budget available of **£8,640**.
- 10.3 The grant applications for this meeting total **£1,920** and if the Members agree the grants outlined in this report this will leave a balance of **£6,720**.

## **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 None

## **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. Hitchin Area Committee Budget spreadsheet

## **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 July 2021.