

HITCHIN COMMITTEE 8th December 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 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 **£1,424** to The North Herts African and Caribbean Community towards funding to provide a year of free and some subsidised events and activities for the whole community to attend and learn about African and Caribbean History and Culture as outlined in 8.1.9-8.1.15 of the officer's report.
- 2.4 **£1,200** to Samaritans of North Herts and Stevenage towards funding for their Samaritans National Walk 2023 as outlined in 8.1.16-8.1.20 of the officer's report.
- 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 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

Applicant	NCT (National Childbirth Trust) North Herts
Project	Breastfeeding and postnatal support group
Sum requested	£920
Total project cost	£920
Match funding	None
Previous support	Yes, £920 from the Letchworth Committee in September
NHDC Policy met	Yes
Council objectives	People First A Brighter Future Together

8.1.2 NCT North Herts would like to apply for funding for their breastfeeding and postnatal support group. Groups are held across Hitchin and Letchworth using halls/venues/community centres. The group they would like to apply for funding for is held at Christchurch, Bedford Road, Hitchin.

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. A similar project funded by a recent grant award from the Letchworth Committee has already proven successful.

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 one in October. These fundraising events helped 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. Approximately 60 new parents have attended one of their sessions in Hitchin.

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

Applicant Project	The North Herts African and Caribbean Community
	Providing a year of free and some subsidised events and activities for the whole community to attend and learn about African and Caribbean History and Culture
Sum requested	£1,424
Total project cost	£3,675
Match funding	£251 Current Account Contents £2,000 Tickets for Community Events
Previous support	Yes, in 2020
NHDC Policy met	Yes
Council objectives	People First A Brighter Future Together

8.1.10 As part of their Beyond Black History Month project, they would like to provide a year of free and some subsidised events and activities for the whole community to attend and learn about African and Caribbean History and Culture. These events would include,

8.1.11 • “Mind Your Black” Mental Health Creative Writing and Mindfulness workshops focused on discussing the effects of Racial Discrimination, Crime and Crime Prevention on the African and Caribbean community. The talks will invite the public and professionals to come together and work in groups to discuss the issues.

8.1.12 • Celebration and research events designed to bring people from African Diaspora cultures together to discuss issues that affect their particular minority group. They hope to invite local stakeholders to re-establish links between the professionals and people. They hope to empower the community to have a voice within local decision making discuss ways to improve issues that impact the North Herts community as a whole. Events will be ticketed to support with costs of entertainment following the group discussions.

8.1.13 • Black History and Culture Talks. A series of themed Black History and Culture talks. They hope to hold these in the community and through workshops to enable attendees to discuss the topics in mixed groups, within a supportive environment.

8.1.14 • Windrush Arts and Crafts week. They will lead a group of children and young people in a creative project that will see us produce an art installation in honour of the HMT Empire Windrush. In 1948 the Windrush brought one of the first large groups of post-war West Indian immigrants to the UK. The participants will be taught about the history of the Windrush generation, with direct first-person accounts of their experiences coming to the “Mother Country”. The installation will be displayed at an annual fundraiser for the North Herts. African and Caribbean Lunch Club. They hope to run this activity in partnership with the North Herts Museum and the Hitchin Library.

8.1.15 They have also approached the Letchworth Area Committee for £1,424.

8.1.16

Applicant Project	Samaritans of North Herts and Stevenage
Sum requested	The Samaritans National Walk 2023 - Providing the support for a national fund-raising event for the charity.
Total project cost	£1,200
Match funding	£2,400
Previous support	£1,200 from reserves, fundraising from Grants and street collections.
NHDC Policy met	None
Council objectives	Yes
	People First
	A Brighter Future Together

8.1.17 The Samaritans service is anonymous, and this region is one of the more populated, and hence by generating more funds for the branch they can supply more listening volunteers and more hours of availability, which can reduce waiting times. Sadly, people do have to wait for a Samaritan Listening volunteer at many times of the day, the more stations available and the more volunteers would reduce this.

8.1.18 The Samaritans National Walk 2023, provides the support for a national fund-raising event for the charity. Most of the functionality will be provided by volunteer actions. The local branch based on Nuns Close, Hitchin, and the national charity will benefit from this fund-raising event. The event is planned for July 1st, 2023, and will take place across Hitchin and surrounding area.

8.1.19 Samaritans central charity will be sharing the information and it will be on several social media platforms. NHC also plan to work more closely with The Samaritans going forward and we will also be able to share details about their service and future events.

8.1.20 The walk is open to all national branches (200), this funding will generate funds to pay for the walk and any excess will go towards the NH&S Branch funds. Individuals will often be sponsored, and they can choose who their sponsorship goes to Central office, their branch or other charities.

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:

- To celebrate Local Democracy Week and Parliament Week in October/November, the team developed youth democracy activities for Keystage 2 primary school children. Councillors and members of the team have been visiting schools for assemblies and Q&A sessions.
- Facilitating the NHC Councillors' Community Surgeries. Also exploring the idea of themed Town Talks moving forward. For example, the next Hitchin Town Talk will be focusing on the Churchgate public consultation.
- Supporting various local and district wide Network Groups such as the Westmill Network Group, Jackmans Network Group, the Grange Network Group, Youth Action, Food Provision, Arts and Culture and the newly resurrected Green and Growing Group.
- The team are co-ordinating an event for Holocaust Memorial Day which will be on 27th January 2023.
- The team helped co-ordinated the Letchworth Remembrance Day event which was held on 13th November 2022.
- 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.
- Sharing information to Community contacts that can help with the current 'Cost of Living Crisis' and sharing information about local 'Warm Hubs'.
- Delivering and promoting 'The Snowman Trail' to North Herts. Snowman sculptures were installed on November 17th (working closely with *Wild in Art*, *Hitchin Bid* and *Cala Homes*). Local artist, Sarah Graham, was asked to decorate one of the snowmen statues.

8.2.2 Update on Previous Grants Awarded

- **Hitchin Allotments – Tool Loan Scheme – update**

Hitchin Allotments Association was awarded £800 for the purchase of a tool store and tools which they will loan out to new allotment tenants.

Hitchin allotments – ‘The tool loan scheme has been set up and advertised, gardening and DIY tools bought including a new strimmer. They have been used already, especially the strimmer which is very popular for new plot holders clearing their plots. The garden tools have also been used for the volunteering activities we have been doing including supporting Hitchin Youth Allotment which is expanding and renovating its plots ready for taking on more users in the Spring. The tools are a long-term investment and will be used over and over again, over many years.’ - Paul Dee, Secretary of Hitchin Allotments Association



- **‘Home is where the Hert is’ exhibition – Part II**

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.'

Holy Saviour Church offered their space to showcase the exhibition in the heart of the Hitchin community. The opening night exceeded all expectations, and everyone involved were pleased to see how many people came along to view the exhibition, to hear the speakers and to enjoy one another's company.

Holy Saviour Church - 'May I say on behalf of Holy Saviour Church how much we really enjoyed the opening event. It was a real pleasure to welcome everyone to our church.

We were delighted to have the opportunity to stage this significant exhibition, and it's certainly helping us to further our aim of being a centre for the whole community. I hope it will be the first of many!' – Brian Caswell.

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. No grants applications were received at the last Hitchin Area Committee meeting. Grants awarded to date total **£3,135** which leaves a budget available of **£8,640**.
- 10.3 The grant applications for this meeting total **£3,544** and if the Members agree the grants outlined in this report this will leave a balance of **£5,096**.

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

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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.