

LETCHWORTH COMMITTEE 15th March 2023

***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 Members' attention 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 Community Engagement officers have been involved in.
- 1.4 To bring to 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 **£698** to Green Care at Norton CIC towards equipment for the next phase of their development as outlined in paragraphs 8.1.1-8.1.7 of the officer's report.
- 2.3 **£1,160** to Letchworth Garden Shed towards shelving units and repair day equipment as outlined in paragraphs 8.1.8-8.1.12 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 Letchworth.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To ensure 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	Green Care at Norton CIC
Project	Equipment for the next phase of their development
Sum requested	£698
Total project cost	£898
Match funding	£200 reserves
Previous support	2020: £400 portaloo and shed 2020: £2,500 disability access provision 2022: £1,050 towards a walking tractor
NHDC Policy met	Yes
Council objectives	People First Sustainability

8.1.2 Green Care at Norton CIC is a social and therapeutic horticulture project based in Letchworth Garden City. In the next phase of their development, they would like to include participants who might not be able, or yet ready, to regularly work outdoors. To this end they have been establishing strong links with Create Community in Letchworth and have identified joint activities to involve some of their clients with Green Care at Norton.

8.1.3 The two activities are:

- Indoor seed starting for indoor plants, herbs and bedding plants.
- Drying and dehydrating surplus produce, herbs and flowers to sell to raise funds.

8.1.4 The funding would go towards the purchase of five indoor hydroponics units which are £140 each and a food dehydration unit for £198.

8.1.5 There are numerous cheap hydroponics units available however, the ones they intend purchasing are robust, fully automated and controlled through an app which means that the participants do not have to worry about making regular adjustments which reduces the possibility of failure.

8.1.6 The food dehydrator will greatly reduce the amount of waste produce they subsequently compost. They will be able to dry and sell chillies, herbs, tomatoes and, flower petals for potpourri, raising funds whilst reducing food waste.

8.1.7 The main beneficiaries of this initiative will be clients of Create Community. The equipment will enable them to take an active part in horticulture by becoming a vital link in the chain of production and sales. This will give them valuable hands-on work experience, to compliment the preparation for work mentoring and courses which they already receive through Create Community.

8.1.8

Applicant	Letchworth Garden Shed
Project	Shelving units and repair day equipment
Sum requested	£1,160
Total project cost	£1,160
Match funding	Funding has been received from Letchworth Heritage Foundation, earmarked for rent on a particular property.
Previous support	None
NHDC Policy met	Yes
Council objectives	People First Sustainability A Brighter Future Together

8.1.9 Letchworth Garden Shed are opening a library of things, which will allow individuals and groups in Letchworth and the surrounding towns to borrow a wide range of items at nominal prices. At the time of writing, they hope to open in late March / early April. They aim to be open four days a week, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday evening and Saturday morning. They will also provide linked activities, such as regular free repair days and skills classes, which will run approximately every three months.

8.1.10 The funding would be used for:

- Second-hand shelving units, to organise and store the stock of items available to borrow.
- A refurbished TV screen which would be used for fixers to review online 'how to' clips. This will be used at repair days.
- Second-hand collapsible trestle tables to set up workstations.

8.1.11 This initiative will benefit many people in the community by enabling them to make / clean / watch / sew / build / fix / bake / redecorate / play without having to buy the associated equipment outright. Additionally, the repair days will provide regular opportunities to have small appliances, clothes etc, fixed, offering a more sustainable option to replacing items.

8.1.12 The group have already received enthusiasm and feedback for the project through their online survey and attending local community events. They aim to have 200 members in the first year. Some items will be borrowed for solo use, like hedge trimmers or jet-washers, but it's reasonable to expect that many will be borrowed for group tasks and family events, such as the projector, gazebo, popcorn maker etc.

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:

- Supporting North Herts CVS and Letchworth Heritage Foundation with planning the All About Us Community Conference which is on 23rd March in Letchworth.
- Met with local community groups and initiatives, including Letchworth Garden Shed and Letchworth Festival.
- Attending the Letchworth Town Centre Strategy Group meetings set up by Letchworth Heritage Foundation.
- The team co-ordinated an event for Holocaust Memorial Day which was on 27th January 2023. The recording can be viewed online [North Herts Council marks Holocaust Memorial Day | North Herts Council \(north-herts.gov.uk\)](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/news/2023/01/27/north-herts-council-marks-holocaust-memorial-day).
- Co-ordinating various local and district wide Network Groups which include the Grange network and Jackmans network.
- 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.
- Continue to facilitate the NHC Councillors' Community Surgeries.

8.2.2 Update on Previous Grants Awarded

- Made with Clay CIC - Update

North Herts Council awarded £2,169 in March 2022 towards the purchase of shelves, this is a quote from Made with Clay about how this funding has benefitted them:

“The shelves are all being used to house both members’ work and our new Monday taster evenings’ work, which began in January to accommodate people who cannot afford or cannot commit to full membership with weekly attendance.

The shelving has been invaluable because the larger capacity has enabled us to keep our membership prices the same, but to expand our numbers to cover our rising operation costs. This has also meant we have been able to leave an extra space in each class to accommodate three shift workers. We have a freelance photographer, an administrator for DHL and an air traffic controller who are all delighted to be able to attend different workshops each week around their shift patterns.

The shelving is also on wheels which means we can move them to do a thorough clean of the area to comply with health and safety guidelines on working with clay.

The old shelves have been repurposed to house equipment in a more tidy, safe and logical way within the studio making it easier for us to find things.

Lastly, the old shelves meant some students had large storage areas and some had much smaller spaces: We have many students with complex emotional needs, and we work hard at making people feel equally valued so it is really great that all students now have an identical space to use for their work. It is a much fairer and more inclusive system.

Please thank everyone on our behalf. We are very grateful.”



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 **£2,956** carried forward from the 2021/22 budget, giving a total budget for the year of **£13,956**. Grants awarded to date total **£11,814**. This leaves a budget available of **£2,142**.
- 10.3 The grant applications for this meeting total **£1,858** and if the Members agree the grants outlined in this report this will leave a balance of **£284** to carry forward into the 2023/24 budget.

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 There are environmental implications associated with both grant applications within this report. Green Care at Norton CIC will be upskilling the local community in understanding the benefits of locally grown produce. Letchworth Garden Shed will be enabling the local community to be more sustainable by offering items to loan.

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

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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.