

**HITCHIN COMMITTEE  
27 JUNE 2017**

**\*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

**AGENDA ITEM No.**

**7**

**TITLE OF REPORT: GRANTS & COMMUNITY UPDATE**

**REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC DIRECTOR OF FINANCE, POLICY & GOVERNANCE**

**EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND RURAL AFFAIRS**

**PRIORITY: ATTRACTIVE AND THRIVING / PROSPER AND PROTECT / RESPONSIVE  
AND EFFICIENT**

**1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 To advise the Committee on the current expenditure and balances of the Area Committee budgets.
- 1.2 To bring to the Committee's attention details of recent requests received for Area Committee Grant Funding, made by community groups and local organisations, which conform to the Authority's Grants Policy approved by Cabinet on June 14<sup>th</sup> 2016.
- 1.3 To advise the Committee of the activities and schemes with which the Community Officer has been involved.
- 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 the provision of grant funding to the organisations outlined below:
  - 2.1.1 Hitchin Senior Citizens - £2,000 as outlined below in 8.1.1
  - 2.1.2 Small Talk (St Faith's Carers and Toddlers group) - £500 as outlined below 8.1.2.
  - 2.1.3 Family Matters - £820 as outlined below in 8.1.3
- 2.2 That all grants be allocated from the 2016/17 carry over amount of £15,300 until it is depleted.
- 2.3 That the Committee endorses the actions taken by the Community Officer to promote greater community capacity and well-being for Hitchin.

### **3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 To ensure the Committee is kept informed of the work of the Community Officer.
- 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 existing Grants policy as agreed by Cabinet in June 2016.
- 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 Corporate 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 in the course of 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 with regard to funding proposals for Area Committee Funds.

### **6. FORWARD PLAN**

- 6.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key decision and has not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

### **7. BACKGROUND**

- 7.1 Members are asked to note the information detailed in Appendix A Hitchin Area Committee Budget Spread sheet, which relates to the end of year Area Committee budget balances for the 2016/17 and Appendix B 2017/18 Committee budget.
- 7.2 The spreadsheet also details pre-allocated sums carried forward from the previous financial years, including balances and past expenditure relating to the allocated and unallocated Area Capital Visioning Budgets available to the Committee.

## **8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS**

### **8.1 Grant Applications for Consideration**

#### 8.1.1 Hitchin Senior Citizens

The Hitchin Senior Citizens Committee has been overseeing activities for older people in the town for the past 49 years. Their main aim is to assist older people to remain active, tackle social isolation by providing assistance with transport needs via the Helping Hands mini-bus service. They support the Friendship Club taking place at Westmill Community Centre each Tuesday where lunch is provided, followed by a Strength and Stability exercise class. They support the Wednesday evening social and bingo evenings and one Saturday each month the Hitchin Helping Hands social club.

The group's annual running costs are £3,500; this includes venue hire, transport and public liability insurance. The group generate £1,100 from subscriptions from members.

Hitchin Senior Citizens are requesting £2,000 from Area Committee Budget in order to cover the cost of 12 months venue hire.

#### 8.1.2 Small Talk (St Faiths Carer and Toddler Group)

Small Talk Carers and Toddlers group has been set up by volunteers at St Faiths Church in order to provide informal drop in sessions for anyone in the local community caring for young children. Based in the Walsworth area they provide an attractive, safe and relaxed environment to meet and get to know one another. There is a cost of £1.50p per family which covers the cost of tea and biscuits.

The group would like to replace the old wooden children's furniture with new modern plastic chairs, they would also like to purchase a soft rug for babies to play on in addition they would like to purchase stimulating toys and puzzles. They are requesting £500 from Area Committee Budget towards this.

#### 8.1.3 Family Matters

The Family Matters community group provide support to disadvantaged, vulnerable families who are not accessing the mainstream community services on offer. The group is based at Oughton Children's Centre in the Westmill area of Hitchin providing practical and emotional support in a safe, supportive environment.

During term times they support parents and children under 5 years old; however during school holidays older siblings are welcome to join in.

The group run a wide range of activities; informal sessions of art, craft, outside play as well as organised activities such as; swimming and music and movement. The program helps to achieve a marked improvement in children's ability to learn by mixing with other children resulting in an improvement in speech, language and confidence.

They also facilitate a parenting programme to educate parents on healthy lifestyles and the benefits of exercise. This includes budget cookery sessions, covering menu plans and food tastings. Parents engage in cooking together inexpensive family meals and learning the benefits of using fresh, seasonal produce.

The group are requesting £820 towards the cost of a summer holiday programme for children aged up to 10 years. Families will be offered a range of fun physical outdoor activities, movement therapy, creative art and craft sessions, picnics, an outing to a local farm and they will also be promoting the healthy lifestyle strategy for all the family.

Families can be referred from Children Services, Children Centres, Voluntary Community Organisations, Health Visitors; families can also refer themselves. Families living in rural isolated areas will be offered transport to enable them to engage with the programme.

## 8.2 Update on previous Grant Awards

### 8.2.1 Citizen's Advice North Herts (CANH)

In May 2015 the Committee awarded £4,147 to the Citizen's Advice North Herts towards the cost of their relocation to their new premises on Station Road in Letchworth. Each Area Committee contributed to the cost pro rata, per capita.

CANH are now fully settled in to the newly refurbished premises, although they continue to provide an outreach service from Thomas Bellamy House in Hitchin on Tuesday and Thursday mornings.

### 8.2.2 Hitchin Counselling Service

£2,700 was awarded to Hitchin Counselling Service from the Discretionary Budget as funding towards the on-going costs of insurance, administration and training.

Hitchin Counselling Service provided 980 counselling sessions to those in need and from disadvantaged backgrounds in the last 12 months.

They have run two training workshops for the counsellors and supervisors in the last year at a cost of £1,195

Paid professional subscriptions and insurance at a cost of £666

Paid postage/website/phone at a cost of £172

Paid for publicity (including cards to put around the town for those who don't use the internet), and purchased name badges for counsellors so that they can be identified in the shared building they use, at a cost of £180

They purchased a projector, at a cost of £517, so they no longer need to go to North Herts CVS every time they do some training.

### 8.2.3 Herts Young Carers

£2,706 was awarded to Herts Young Carers from the Discretionary Budget as support funding towards the costs of providing the service to 10 young carers in Hitchin.

### 8.2.4 North Herts Minority Ethnic Forum

£750 was awarded to North Herts Minority Ethnic Forum from the Discretionary Budget as support funding towards the cost of a two week summer holiday health, fitness and community safety project. This project was very well attended, unfortunately due to lack of funding the project ran for just one week instead of two.

### 8.2.5 Bancroft Gardens - Capital Visioning project

£7,810 of the £26,403 allocated to Bancroft Gardens has now been released as the project to enhance the river bank has now commenced. The old pathway along the river bank has been removed along with some over mature trees that were shading out the river. This will allow for a more natural waterside margin to be shortly created. The foundations of a new path have also been laid and the top coat should shortly be installed..

## 8.3 Update on Community Engagement

### 8.3.1 Westmill Community Centre and Sports Facility

The new Westmill Community Centre has now passed its one year snagging period and the building has been signed off by the contractor. Responsibility for all maintenance now passes over to the lease holders, namely the Westmill Community Association (WCA).

The multi-use games area and car park is also now complete.

The games area has been completed to the highest specification with a state of the art sports surface and flood lighting, suitable for 5 a side football, basket ball, tennis etc. Due to the high specification it will not be possible to have the facility as open access as this could severely limit the lifespan of the surface.

However, the WCA have agreed to manage the facility for a period of 12 months on behalf of North Hertfordshire District Council.

After which time all parties will be able to evaluate the business case and how best to continue the management of the facility.

#### 8.3.2 North Herts Youth Providers Micro Conference on 5th April

The Youth Providers Micro Conference took place in early April. The event aimed to provide a networking opportunity to organisations providing services to children and young people across the district. The 'micro' element meant that the conference was kept short (just 2 hours) the time limit provides a focus for participants to get the most out of the event. There were three short presentations providing information on funding, volunteering, mental health first aid training and the current provision from Youth Connexions followed by market place networking. 11 organisations provided displays and 40 people attended. Feedback was extremely positive with everyone requesting that the conference be made an annual event.

#### 8.4 **Highways Matters**

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.

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 The Terms of Reference in relation to Area Committees confirm that they may establish and maintain relationships with outside bodies/voluntary organisations which include discretionary grant aid/financial support but excluding grants for district-wide activities. The Committee has delegated powers, as a body, to allocate discretionary budgets and devolved budgets within the terms determined by the Council and outlined in the current Grant Policy agreed by Cabinet in June 2016.

9.2 Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 provides a General Power of Competence which gives local authorities the powers to do anything:-

- An individual may generally do
- Anywhere in the UK or elsewhere
- For a commercial purpose or otherwise, for a charge or without a charge
- Without the need to demonstrate that it will benefit the authority, its area or person's resident or present in its area.

9.3 Section 137 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 A, end of year 2016/17:-  
Following a 55% reduction in the committee's budget last year, the Committee started the financial year with a budget of £19,600.  
However, there was also a carry forward amount from 2015/16 of £39,700 and the committee agreed that it would be prudent to spend from this budget before utilising the current 2016/17 budget.  
Over the 12 month period grant funding of £31,200 was released to local groups, including £20,000 to Westmill Community Association towards the cost of moving into and furnishing the new Community Centre (allocated in November 2015).  
This left an amount of £6000 to carry forward from 2015/16.  
However £10,303 was released for grants from the 2016/17 leaving £9,297 unallocated amount to carry forward.  
Therefore the total amount carried forward to spend in 2017/18 is £15,297.
- 10.2 As outlined in Appendix B Committee budget 2017/18:-  
The agreed budget for this financial year is £19,600. In addition to £15,300 carried forward from 2016/17 equates to a total amount of £34,900 for the provision of Community Development Grants. As outlined in recommendation 2.2 all spending should be allocated from the carry over amount until it is depleted at which point funding shall be allocated from the 2017/18 budget.
- 10.3 The Capital Visioning funds are now all either spent or allocated to redevelopment projects in Bancroft Gardens.

## **11. RISK IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 There are no relevant risk entries that have been recorded on Covalent, 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 All projects that are assigned area committee funding are assessed to ensure that they do not negatively impact on any part of the local community. The only deviation to this is where a minority or marginalised group may specifically receive funding or allocation of resources to address a particular area of need or 'gap' in provision. This is demonstrated by the applications from all three grant applications presented here.

### **13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS**

13.1 The Social Value Act and “go local” policy do not apply to this report.

### **14. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

14.1 There are no pertinent Human Resource implications associated with any items within this report.

### **15. APPENDICES**

15.1 Appendix A - End of 2016/17 financial year budget sheet

15.2 Appendix B - 2017/18 financial year budget sheet

### **16. CONTACT OFFICERS**

16.1 Author: Claire Morgan Community Development Officer  
Email: [claire.morgan@north-herts.gov.uk](mailto:claire.morgan@north-herts.gov.uk)

16.2 Contributors: Anne Miller, Assistant Accountant  
Email: [anne.miller@north-herts.gov.uk](mailto:anne.miller@north-herts.gov.uk)

Kerry Shorrocks, Corporate Human Resources Manager  
Email: [Kerry.shorrocks@north-herts.gov.uk](mailto:Kerry.shorrocks@north-herts.gov.uk)

Tim Everitt, Performance Improvement Officer  
Email: [tim.everitt@north-herts.gov.uk](mailto:tim.everitt@north-herts.gov.uk)

Reuben Ayavoo, Policy Officer  
Email: [reuben.ayavoo@north-herts.gov.uk](mailto:reuben.ayavoo@north-herts.gov.uk)

Anthony Roche, Corporate Legal Manager and Monitoring Officer  
Email: [Anthony.roche@north-herts.gov.uk](mailto:Anthony.roche@north-herts.gov.uk)

### **17. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

17.1 Review of Policies and Procedures for Financial Assistance to Voluntary and Community Organisations, November 2002.

17.2 Review of Grant Policy Cabinet June 2016