

**HITCHIN COMMITTEE
18 JUNE 2019**

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF REPORT: GRANTS & COMMUNITY UPDATE

REPORT OF THE POLICY & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MANAGER

EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

COUNCIL 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 Committee Grant budgets.
- 1.2 To bring to the Committee's attention details of recent requests received for Committee Grant Funding, made by community groups and local organisations.
- 1.3 To advise the Committee of the activities and schemes with which the Community Engagement officers have been involved in.
- 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 considers allocating funding from their discretionary community budget towards the projects below:
- 2.2 **£712** to 8th Oughton Scouts towards the cost of litter picking and sports equipment. As outlined in 8.1.1
- 2.3 **£915** to Buzzworks towards the cost of refurbishing their classroom as outlined in 8.1.2
- 2.4 **£1,500** to Creatives towards the cost IT Equipment for their youth facility as outlined in 8.1.3
- 2.5 **£1,500** to Hitchin Forum towards the cost of purchasing Gazebos for community events as outlined in 8.1.4
- 2.6 **£1,000** to Tilehouse Preschool towards the cost of volunteer training as outlined in 8.1.6
- 2.7 **£1,500** to Hitchin Fun Club towards the cost of venue hire as outlined in 8.1.7

- 2.8 That the Committee endorses the actions taken by the Community Engagement 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 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 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 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 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. Under the current grant criteria there is no upper limit outlined for the amount of grant funding to be allocated which can be decided at the Committee's discretion.

7.2 Members are asked to note the information detailed in Appendix 1. Hitchin Area Committee Budget Spread sheet, which relates to the Area Committee budget balances for 2019/20. The spreadsheet also details pre-allocated sums carried forward from the previous financial years, including balances and past expenditure.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

8.1 Grant Applications

8.1.1

Applicant	8th Oughton Scouts Group
Project	Purchase of litter picking and sports equipment
Sum requested	£712
Total project cost	£712
Match funding	100% funding required
Annual expenditure	£4,770.83
Funds held	5,874.00 as of 2017
Previous support	£1086 granted in 2016
NHDC Policy met	Yes
Strategic objective met	Attractive & Thriving

The 8th Oughton Scout group based in Oughton School on the Westmill Estate serve one of Hitchin's most deprived areas. They provide a much needed outlet and valuable activities for children on the estate. They also make provision to subsidise fees, uniform costs and outings for those families who need financial assistance to ensure that all the Scouts have equal opportunity to take part.

The group are requesting £712 to cover the cost of purchasing Litter Picking equipment to enable the scouts to take part in litter picks such as Clean Up Hitchin their own local events.

In addition they require sponge balls to play indoor ball games in the winter months which enhance their fitness and wellbeing.

There activities will take place mainly around the Westmill area but they will be assisting with litter picks around the Town and loaning the litter picking equipment out to other scout groups.

30 litter pickers	£480
30 pairs of gloves for juniors	£132
10 Foam Balls varying sizes	£100

The current grant policy states that an application should not be more than 70% of the total cost. If members are minded to provide funding 70% of £712 would equate to

8.1.2

Applicant	Buzzworks
Project	Refurbishment of Classroom facility
Sum requested	£915
Total project cost	£2,108
Match funding	£500 applied from HCC locality budget Other income from sales of Honey and School Visits
Annual expenditure	£5,611

Funds held	£8726
Previous support	None
NHDC Policy met	Yes
Strategic objective met	Attractive & Thriving, Prosper and Protect

Buzzworks Association was set up in order to educate the public in the importance of bees to the environment and to promote and further the craft of beekeeping. They are operate from two sites in Hitchin; Buzzworks site, off Old Hale Way, Hitchin (Bee Discovery Centre and garden) and Honeyworks site, off Burford Way, Hitchin (main apiary and beekeeper training site)

Their activities include:

- Providing information at monthly market stall
- Holding Open Days (3 this year) at Bee Discovery Centre for the public to learn about bees, pollination and honey
- Hosting educational sessions for school at Bee Discovery Centre
- Offering educational visits to schools across Herts
- Hosting recreational sessions at Bee Discovery Centre for youth groups eg Scouts and Brownies
- Holding monthly meetings for members and guests
- Running beekeeping training sessions and Taster Days on the Honeyworks site
- Supporting new beekeepers
- Raising income through sale of honey at monthly market stall and other similar events in Hitchin.

The trustees are currently reviewing the education programme and will be offering a limited trial programme of six half-day sessions to local schools and home education groups. They have also had queries from local youth groups and wish to encourage repeat visits form local schools have enjoyed past visits. They are fund raising to purchase children sized table sand chairs, new storage and teaching resources and equipment including a new projector and screen.

8.1.3

Applicant	Creative Minds Ltd (CIC)
Project	Purchase of IT equipment
Sum requested	£1,500
Total project cost	£2,000
Match funding	£500 from Fundraising event
Annual expenditure	Newly formed group.
Funds held	None
Previous support	None as this is a new organisation
NHDC Policy met	Yes
Strategic objective met	Attractive & Thriving, Responsive & Efficient

Creatives are a new initiative set up to provide education and positive leisure activities for young people. They will also provide space for other community groups to hire and use. They are operating from the space located above Iceland at 23 Churchgate, in Hitchin town centre. They are applying for funding towards the purchase of IT equipment for young people to use while in the centre. This will be used to encourage young people to complete homework or research, as well as creating music, design and films all of which can be produced with IT. They will be targeting young people from secondary school year 8 upwards. In addition they will engage young people who may be loitering in the market area in Hitchin during school hours.

During the first week of operation they had 30 young people from Years 8 and 9 (from the three secondary schools in Hitchin)

Creatives aim to provide a safe and supportive environment for young people of all backgrounds and cultures. They intend the venue to be inviting in order to engage young people with multi-needs as well as provide a multi – use community space for hire.

The expenditure consists of £1500 for Laptops, £350 for Software and £150 for Volunteer Training. They are requesting £1,500 and hope to raise the remaining £500 by holding a fundraising disco for under 18's at the venue on 24th May.

As outlined within the current grant policy the amount requested should be 70% of the total project cost. If members are minded to support this grant officers can only recommend £1,400.

8.1.4

Applicant	Hitchin Forum
Project	Purchase of 20 x Gazebos Canopies for community events
Sum requested	£1,500
Total project cost	£2,500
Match funding	£1,000 from HCC Locality Fund (not applied for yet)
Annual expenditure	£1980.12
Funds held	£1108.26
Previous support	None
NHDC Policy met	Yes
Strategic objective met	Attractive and Thriving

The Hitchin Forum is a constituted community group who have an involvement in various civic activities, campaigning on local issues and supporting the local community for the benefit of Hitchin.

There are approximately 20 voluntary and community organisations, charities, churches and schools who use the market square in Hitchin for regular events which use Gazebos (including NHDC for monthly Councillor's Surgeries).

The activities in Market Place enhance many aspects of community life, supporting each and every organisation that uses it. Renewing these facilities will improve the visual impact and attractiveness of the area.

The gazebos are used most weekends throughout the year. The Gazebo canopies are now becoming very tatty and no longer fit for purpose due to general wear and tear.

As outlined within the current grant policy the amount requested should be 70% of the total project cost. If members are minded to support this grant officers can only recommend £1,175.61

8.1.5

Applicant	Tilehouse Pre-School
Project	Purchase of I.T. equipment to allow staff to carry out their administrative work effectively
Sum requested	£1,000
Total project cost	£1,337.47
Match funding	£350 from various fund raising activities
Annual expenditure	£99,742.66
Funds held	£20,476.57

Previous support	£1,000 in April 2006
NHDC Policy met	Attractive and Thriving, Prosper and Protect, Responsive and Efficient
Strategic objective met	YES

Tilehouse Preschool nursery is an early years setting who offer a stimulating ,inclusive environment for children aged from 2 and quarter to school age. They operate from 9am to 3pm Monday to Thursday and from 9am to 12pm on Friday. They offer specialist provision for pre-school age children and for children in their nursery year, which includes opportunities to engage with the local community through partnerships with a local retirement home and other local facilities such as the library, Waitrose and the market.

Based in Tilehouse Street Baptist Church, the group set up in 1968 and celebrated their 50th anniversary last year.

They are requesting £1,000 towards the purchase of IT equipment which will allow their staff to carry out administrative work effectively. They need to purchase 2 computers and a tablet. The Computers will be used by the Pre-school and nursery leader and the Bookkeeper and the tablet by staff practitioners working directly with the children. Currently children from 38 families attend the Pre-School each year. Over the lifetime of the IT equipment at least 150 families will benefit.

Their offer is a significant asset to the community, providing services and support for families, and helping to make Hitchin an attractive place to live. They offer a high quality Early Years environment which supports young children and their families. They are an inclusive setting and welcome children, whatever their background or need. They support children with Special Educational Needs and children who receive the Early Years Pupil Premium. They also provide places for children whose families attract the highest levels of funding because of their financial situation.

They value and maintain the connection with Tilehouse Street Baptist Union Church community who initially set up the Preschool and Nursery as a playgroup for local families, and share in their mission to provide services and facilities for the benefit of the local community.

North Hertfordshire is an area with a well deserved reputation for educational excellence. They are currently developing a strategy for delivering an Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum that will allow them to focus effectively on the Hertfordshire-wide priorities of 'Narrowing the Gap' (aimed at children receiving the Early Years Pupil Premium) and on developing 'Spaces to Play', a holistic approach to learning which will prepare young children more appropriately for child initiated learning once they reach school. Improving their IT support will allow the implementation of more focused and detailed planning, maintain better records of individual children's learning, and to continue to strengthen communication and partnerships with parents. This will enrich the educational offer in the area even further.

Breakdown of the costs:

Desktop PC	£649.99
Thinkpad Laptop	£559.99
Wireless mouse and keyboard	£18.99
MediaPad Tablet	£108.50

The amount requested slightly exceeds 70% of the total project cost as outlined within the grant policy if the Members are minded to provide the 70% towards the project it would equate to £936.23.

8.1.6

Applicant	Hitchin Fun Club
Project	Venue hire for one year
Sum requested	£1,500
Total project cost	£4,268
Match funding	Potentially £2,768 from Hitchin Youth Trust
Annual expenditure	£60,854
Funds held	£764.00
Previous support	£650 in 2006
NHDC Policy met	Yes
Strategic objective met	Attractive and Thriving. Responsive and Efficient

The Hitchin Fun Club provides a safe, caring environment for children to play, explore, learn and engage in many different activities. The club is run for ages 4-12 years and activities are suitable for all age ranges and children's interests. They are a 'not for profit' club set up in 1989. The club works with the local community in providing safe, quality care for children at a low cost to parents. This ensures that the care is accessible for all that require the service.

They are requesting funding towards the cost of hiring the Highbury Infant School premises to operate the club after school and during school holidays. The annual cost for 2019/20 will be £4,268. The current grant criteria can not provide more than 70% of the total cost of a project. Therefore if members are minded to award the grant they could not provide more than £2987.60.

Officer recommendation is £1,500 the club has also been advised to apply to the Hitchin Youth Trust for match funding and to contact their Hertfordshire County Councillor to enquire in regard to Members Locality Fund.

At the time of writing match funding has not been applied for.

8.2 Community Engagement and update on Previous Grants awarded

8.2.1 Policy and Community Engagement Team Restructure

Following the corporate wide restructure of the district council, there have been some changes to the Council's Corporate Policy and Community team. This has resulted in the merger of the Community Development Team and the Policy Team. This has created a new team which is called Policy & Community Engagement.

The team is managed by the Policy & Community Engagement Manager. Reuben Ayavoo (previously the Senior Policy Officer) takes up this post.

The Policy & Community Engagement Manager will directly supported by the Community Engagement Team Leader (Claire Morgan), Community Engagement Officer – Events (Ashley Hawkins) covering Royston and Baldock Committees and Trainee Policy Officer (Kei-Retta Farrell).

The Community Engagement Team leader will be supported by two Assistant Community Engagement Officers (Lea Ellis and Katie Staddon) and Grants and Data Systems officer (Alan Fleck).

The Community Engagement team will be covering Letchworth, Hitchin and the Southern Rural Committee's.

The Community Engagement Officer – Events will cover the Area committees of Baldock and Royston; support events in Royston and Baldock and seek to support new district events as practical; link officer to the North Hertfordshire Safety Advisory Group.

8.2.2 Funding agreed in 2007 for Radio Equipment

In the summer of 2007 the Hitchin Committee agreed to provide £20,000 over a two year period to operate a youth project in partnership with Groundwork's youth development officer. As part of the project a youth radio station was set up called Mill FM and the funding was used to purchase radio equipment.

When the project was completed it was agreed that the radio equipment could be moved to the Youth Connexions youth centre on Bancroft.

Youth Connexions are now known as YC Hertfordshire and the Bancroft Centre is no longer fit for purpose. Therefore YC Herts will be vacating the building in the near future and relocating their Hitchin operations from Nightingale house.

This is an opportunity to re-provide the radio equipment to another venue in North Herts.

The Community Engagement Team Leader and YC Herts Area manager are keen for the following to be applied.

- ensure that Members are in agreement with the new venue/host organisation
- for the radio station moving forward to remain under the auspices of NHDC but be hosted by an appropriate organisation
- should continue to be a resource for young people in North Hertfordshire
- should always be hosted by an organisation who will make no commercial gain

8.2.3 The Hitchin Museum building

At the last meeting of the Hitchin Committee on 5th March 2019 Members asked for information regarding the condition of the building at Paynes Park that was formerly the Hitchin Museum. It was agreed that the Community Officer should request information from the Commercial Service Director for inclusion in the Grant and Community Update Report rather than requesting either an information note or formal briefing from officers. The following questions were posed to the Service Director - Commercial and his responses are outlined below:

1. *When was a condition survey last undertaken on the building, if it was a long time ago can we get an up to date one done?*

A condition survey was completed in 2013; however there were some limitations to the detail of the survey on higher level elements. More recently an external survey was carried out which has identified some external works, including roofing, external rendering to walls and redecorations. This work is in the process of being arranged with a view to the works being completed within the first quarter of 2019/20.

2. *Could you please provide the estimated costs in order to get the building into a habitable condition?*

Until the future use of the building has been established it is not possible to identify the full extent of the internal works and therefore we are unable to provide a cost estimate at this time.

3. *When will it be deemed surplus to the requirements of NHDC and available for use by the Community?*

At the moment it is not possible to state when or if the facility will be surplus to requirements. As set out in the briefing note that was provided to all Hitchin Councillors in January 2019 the Council will be undertaking an options appraisal later in the year, please see extract below: -

Use of Hitchin Museum

The current use of the Hitchin Museum was discussed as part of the visit and officers explained that it is currently being used by the museum team to store some items as there is not sufficient storage in the district. Discussion took place about future long-term use; it was agreed that the museum can not be looked at in isolation and an options appraisal needs to be undertaken to look at other buildings which have a direct impact on this facility to determine the best approach for the Council. The aim is for the Commercial Manager (currently not in post) and Senior Estates Surveyor to undertake this work, which is likely to commence in July/August 2019. The reason for this work not being able to start sooner is because the Senior Estates Surveyor is due to leave the council at the end of January 2019. Therefore, both posts are currently being advertised with an aim to have individuals in post by June 2019.

8.2.4 Walsworth Festival

Following the grant provided at the last meeting the Walsworth Festival event took place on Sunday 19th May without any major incident and to the enjoyment of hundreds of people from the local community. Fortunately the weather was perfect and the sun shone. Many local community groups took part hosting stalls, performing, and fundraising. There were many interesting displays and local musical performers showcasing in the bar marquee provided by The Hermitage. There were activities for dogs, children and all ages to take part in, fairground rides, face painting, henna tattoos, mosaic workshops and more.

There were refreshments and stalls in the Walsworth Community Centre and more entertainment in St Faiths Church. Comments received so far seem to suggest that the new committee have done a great job and 2019 has been one of the best Walsworth Festivals that Hitchin has had.

At the time of writing there has yet to be a Wash Up meeting for the organisers to discuss what went well and where improvements need to be made but it is hoped that the Committee will remain to organise the 2020 event and continue to build on the success.

8.2.5 Rhythms of the World (ROTW)

ROTW 2019 is taking place in Hitchin Town Hall on 29th June in Hitchin Town Hall. This is very much going back to the roots of the organisation. The first ROTW took place in Hitchin Town Hall in 1992 and held concerts in the venue for the following four years until they moved it to a free outdoor event in the market place in 1996.

This year's all day free event starts at 12:00 noon and will include drum workshops and music from around the world and the UK.

They have invited local pubs around the town centre to be involved for the weekend with putting on music from Friday to Sunday.

The Police have raised concerns that having the involvement of local pubs may increase the risk of anti-social behaviour and litter in the town centre. The ROTW organisers have been invited to the Safety Advisory Group to present their case and receive advice and guidance from the regulatory authorities in attendance.

As there are no events taking place out doors they do not need to apply for premises licences. The public houses and venues (including the Town Hall) all have their own Licence for entertainment and sale of alcohol.

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.

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 Area Committees also have delegated power under section 9.8.1 (a) & (b) 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. Section 9.8.2 (g) of the Constitution in respect of Area Committees' Terms of Reference provides 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 Committee budget 2019/20

The agreed budget for this financial year is £11,000 in line with the agreed 20% reduction in grant budgets as agreed by full council.

All carry forward amounts from 2018/19 total £3,658, providing a total of **£13,658** available

- 10.2 Should Members be minded to provide grant funding as requested under recommendation 2.1 the total spend from the Committee Budget will be **£8,656**

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" 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 1 - 2019/20 financial year budget sheet

16. CONTACT OFFICERS

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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.