

**HITCHIN COMMITTEE  
6 SEPTEMBER 2017**

**\*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

**AGENDA ITEM No.**

**8**

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

REPORT OF THE COMMUNITIES MANAGER  
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 considers allocating £2000 to provide a bench outside of the Hitchin Town Hall for any one who may need to rest on their journey up Brand Street as outlined in 8.1.1
- 2.2 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 Area Committee budget balances for 2017/18.

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 Update on Community Engagement

#### 8.1.1 Bench outside Hitchin Town Hall and update on North Herts Museum

Officers have agreed to the installation of a bench outside Hitchin Town Hall for the community to use, in particular older people or those with disabilities who may need to rest half way walking up Brand Street. Officers are currently looking at different types of benches in order to select one that will fit well in the space and blend with the design of the building. It was suggested by members at the last meeting in June that they would be willing to consider providing funds to cover the cost of purchase and installation of the bench. However, at the time of writing the costs have not been provided but members may be minded to allocate an amount from the budgets in order that funds are available when needed.

The public have enjoyed the opportunity to have a private view of the new museum with tours of the facility that have been mostly fully booked. It is hoped that the Contracts & Project Manager will be able to update the committee further on both of these matters at the next meeting in December.

#### 8.1.2 Westmill Community Centre and Sports Facility

To celebrate the first anniversary of the opening of the centre Westmill Community Association are working in partnership with Rhythms of the World and all the centre's regular hirers to put on a community event taking place on Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> September from 2pm.

Family arts activities will be available during the afternoon and a music event in the evening.

#### 8.1.3 North Herts Minority Ethnic Forum

The North Herts Minority Ethnic Forum based in Hitchin at Unity House on Winbush Road is planning to extend the premises to the rear in order to have more space and increase participation.

The Communities Officer has been liaising with their chief executive in order to advice on suitable funding streams to assist with the project.

She also facilitated a meeting between the NHMEF and Howard Cottage Housing Association who are the landlords of the building in order to get their agreement for the work to take place.

#### 8.1.4 Hitchin Hackspace

Hitchin Hackspace have now signed the lease and taken possession of the former toilet block at Bancroft Recreation ground. They will be seeking funding to assist with the conversion of the building. They may be applying for some revenue funds for equipment via the Area Committee budgets and possibly will apply to the Community Facilities Capital Grant fund towards the building work.

#### 8.1.5 Art Work Based on Windmill Hill

The Communities Officer liaised between NHDC Grounds Maintenance officers and Hitchin Initiative on behalf of the locally based artist David Johnson. Mr Johnson who has visual impairment wished to place his sculpture representing large scale braille titled 'To big to feel' on Windmill Hill. The piece needed relocating from its previous location at the campus at the Royal Holloway College, Egham in Surrey.

The sculpture was moved with financial assistance from the Hitchin Initiative and installed with the permission of the Grounds Maintenance Service Manager.

The local community have been interacting with the sculpture on the hill and on occasion the pieces have been moved around, but Mr Johnson attends to it daily by putting the dots back into position. The sculpture will be in place until approximately mid September.

#### 8.1.6 Waste & Recycling Survey

The Authority has received over 6500 responses from the Waste & Recycling Survey, across East and North Herts residents. The majority of these are via social media. The results of the survey will be analysed and collated in advance of Cabinet meeting in October.

### 8.2 **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 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.
- 10.2 At the last meeting of the Committee held in June £7,230 grant funding was allocated and provided to 4 community groups from the £15,300 carry forward amount. This leaves a current carry forward from the 2016/17 budget of £10,570.
- 10.3 The Capital Visioning funds are now all either spent or allocated to redevelopment projects in Bancroft Gardens of which £7,810 has been spent on the project the remainder of which is intended to be utilised within the current financial year..

## **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.

## **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 - 2017/18 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