

**HITCHIN COMMITTEE
1 OCTOBER 2019**

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF REPORT: GRANTS & COMMUNITY UPDATE

REPORT OF: THE POLICY & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MANAGER

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: 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 **£2,434.13** to Hitchin Senior Citizens Welfare Committee to pay transport costs for members as as outlined in 8.1.1 (Responsive and Efficient)
- 2.3 **£1,500** to Keech Hospice Care towards running costs of their children's 24hr advice line as outlined in 8.1.2 (Attractive and Thriving, Prosper and Protect, Responsive and Efficient)
- 2.4 **£906.50** to Ravidassia Community Centre for a commercial cooker as outlined in 8.1.3 (Attractive and Thriving, Prosper and Protect, Responsive and Efficient)
- 2.5 That the £3,658 carry forward amount from 2018/19 be reallocated to the general development budget as outlined under item 10.1.

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| 2.6 | That the Committee endorses the actions taken by the Community Engagement team to promote greater community capacity and well-being for Hitchin. |
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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	Hitchin Senior Citizens Welfare Committee
Project	Westmill Friendship Club, Westmill Lunch Club and the Strength and Stability Exercise Club
Sum requested	£2,434.
Total project cost	£3,836.
Match funding	£1000.00 from HCC Locality Budgets (<i>yet to be applied for</i>)
Annual expenditure	£3836.13
Funds held	£2649.68
Previous support	£3,000 June 2017
NHDC Policy met	Yes
Strategic objective met	Responsive and Efficient

First set up in 1955, the Hitchin Senior Citizens Welfare Committee provides support and friendship to elderly residents in Hitchin and the surrounding villages. They run regular lunch clubs, a friendship group and a stability and exercise club. The activities are generally held at the Westmill Community Centre in Hitchin. The objects of the club are:

- To support Senior Citizens' clubs with finding and paying for hall space.
- To support senior citizens to access transport.
- To support older people to be active in the community.
- To support individuals to set up groups to give older people a wider choice of activities

The group are requesting £2,434. Under the guidance to grant applicants they are advised that it is reasonable to apply for amounts between £500 and £1,500 given the level of current funding budgets.

However, under the current grant criteria members are at liberty to award any amount they wish up to the available budget as outlined in Appendix 1.

8.1.2

Applicant	Keech Hospice
Project	Expansion of 24hr telephone advice line.
Sum requested	£1,500
Total project cost	£28,122.03
Match funding	£22,122.03
Annual expenditure	£10,326
Funds held	£12,384 (31-03-18)
Previous support	None
NHDC Policy met	Yes
Strategic objective met	Attractive and Thriving, Prosper and Protect, Responsive and Efficient.

Keech Hospice Care provide specialist palliative care to children who have life-limiting conditions. The children's 24hr Advice Line is an on-going service that is available for any family or health care professional caring for a child from Herts, Beds and Milton Keynes. Although Keech is a national charity, they supported 42 children and their relatives from North Hertfordshire in 2017/2018 – 35 of which were from Hitchin and the surrounding area.

8.1.3

Applicant	Ravidassia Community Centre
Project	Cooking Educational Project.
Sum requested	£906.25
Total project cost	£1,295
Match funding	£388.50
Annual expenditure	£19,902
Funds held	£5,507
Previous support	£0
NHDC Policy met	Yes
Strategic objective met	Attractive and Thriving, Prosper and Protect, Responsive and Efficient.

The Ravidassia is a multicultural centre, based in Hitchin but open to all, promoting equality & diversity for everyone. It offers educational activities including language classes, healthy cooking for children & adults. They are looking to expand into pre & after school clubs, Kumon and lunch clubs for the lonely and elderly. Current and future activities will be educational based. The centre has just teamed up with the Cookery Eatery project who will be delivering cookery and food education sessions.

8.2 Community Engagement and update on Previous Grants awarded

8.2.1 Policy and Community Engagement Team

The team have been continuing to engage and network with local community groups and initiatives. For example:

- The formation of the Food Provision Group which brings together representatives of organisations working towards tackling food poverty in our area. Best Before Café in Letchworth and Hitchin Food Rescue Hub have been major players, along with the local churches and their school holiday scheme Make Lunch.
- A very well attended network meeting at the Westmill Community Centre was held in July, which coincided with a visit of the Hertfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner. He had the opportunity to see a large group of cross-agency professionals working together for the good of the community.
- We were invited to and attended AGM's for the Hitchin Senior Citizens Welfare Committee and the North Herts 50+ Group.

- A successful surgery was held in the Market Place at the beginning of August, well attended by councillors and residents alike. The event coincided with the official opening of the North Herts Museum which was attended by members of the team.
- Our new Facebook group is up and running. Engage North Herts aims to bring together community groups from across the district.

8.2.2 Update on Litter Pick by 8th Oughton Scouts

Two litter picks are planned for September (kit only recently purchased).

Areas to be targeted are around Westmill Community Centre and also by the river in the Walsworth area.

8.2.3 Update Buzzworks Education Centre

The treasurer has been busy researching the best value screen and projector. In general Buzzworks has had a very successful summer with money raised from open days and an increased demand for visits to the education centre. There are three more visits scheduled before the end of the season.

8.2.4 Update on Creatives

Funds have now been released to Creatives who have successfully completed and had approved their application to become a Community Interest Company. The Community Engagement Team are continuing to support them in terms of creating posters, publicising their events and telephone support. They have been to visit the Bancroft Centre to view the radio equipment.

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 A Committee budget 2019/20

The agreed budget for this financial year is £11,000 in line with the 20% reduction in grant budgets as agreed by full council. At the 1st meeting of the financial year in June 2019 the committee provided £7,127 to organisations in grant funding, leaving £3,873 to utilise from the 2019/20 financial year.

The carry forward amount of £3,658 from 2018/19 had been allocated to use towards the cost of signage required for Woodside Car Park. This signage has now been installed utilising other budgets within the Authority. Therefore this amount can be reallocated for use in the general development budget.

This will provide a total of **£7,531** in the budgets.

The grant funding applied for in this round add up to **£4,840** which, if members are minded to agree these applications would leave **£2,691** for the next two Hitchin Committee meetings scheduled in December and March.

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.