

RECORD OF DECISION MADE UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY

PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

Any interest to declare/ or conflict and any dispensation granted for the Officer or Executive Member involved in the decision, although see below re other members interests*

SERVICE DIRECTORATE: Resources

1. DECISION TAKEN

The provision of funding of **£8,500** from the Coronavirus Community Support Fund. The funding will assist organisations to meet the needs of the local community response to the Covid-19 pandemic. This funding is for the following applications:

£2,000 – to **Kings Community Church** towards the provision of food and hygiene parcels as outlined in 8.1

£1,500 – to **North Herts & Stevenage Samaritans** to purchase individual telephone headsets and computer monitors to assist with Covid safe measures for their volunteers 8.2.

£5,000 – to **Hitchin Tilehouse Rotary** on behalf of Hitchin Mental Health Recovery Team towards the cost of mental health provision via Hitchin Schools 8.3.

2. DECISION TAKER

Service Director: Resources, in consultation with the Executive Member – Finance and IT-Cllr Ian Albert.

3. DATE DECISION TAKEN:

3 December 2020

4. REASON FOR DECISION

4.1 The Community Support Fund seeks to support essential services which find themselves under increased pressure owing to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This funding will support three specific areas in the first instance. These are:

- Provision of food and essentials
- Mental Health support (including loneliness caused by isolation)
- Domestic Abuse support

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

5.1 There are no alternative options being proposed other than those detailed within the text of this report.

6. CONSULTATION (INCLUDING THE EFFECT ON STAKEHOLDERS, PARTNERS AND THE PUBLIC)

6.1 The Members of the Community Facilities Capital and District Wide Revenue Grant panel and Executive members for Community Engagement and Finance and IT were consulted via a virtual meeting held on Thursday 26th November 2020.

6.2 Consultation with the respective officers and external bodies/groups has taken place with regards to these funding applications.

7. FORWARD PLAN

7.1 This decision is not a key Executive decision and has therefore not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

8. BACKGROUND/ RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

8.1	Applicant	Kings Community Church
	Project	Food hub providing food parcels to local people in need
	Sum requested	£2,075
	Total project cost	£2,075
	Joint funding	None
	NHDC Policy met	Yes
	Council Priorities	Build thriving and resilient communities

Kings Community Church are applying for a grant to continue running the food hub from their premises on the Jackman's Estate in Letchworth. During lockdown they have been running a food hub 3 times a week alongside providing food parcels to those in urgent need. They were receiving food from 'best before' outlets, but this has now finished, and they are currently having to purchase food for the food parcels. However, they are still working in partnership with Hitchin Food Hub and the Need Project who provide Best Before food where possible

They are currently supporting approx. 15 families. These are families/individuals that have been furloughed and have now lost their jobs or have not been able to return to work yet for various reasons or are just struggling financially.

Anyone can be referred regardless of faith, culture, sexuality or gender. The Food Hub is there to provide for those in need in a non-judgmental and confidential way in line with Data protection laws.

Food parcels are given to families every Friday afternoon. Kings Community Church also work in partnership with Make Lunch and the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation over the school holidays to provide extra activities to the families' being supported. They worked with Make Lunch over the October half term to distribute family food /craft boxes.

The Food Hub is run by volunteers who have all undergone training in protecting children/vulnerable adults, and all carry current DBS checks. All volunteers have food and hygiene certificates for safe handling and disposal of food. All data protection guidelines are adhered to. Government guidelines on Covid 19 are adhered to and people using the food hub are asked to socially distance when arriving to collect their food. They are not encouraged to enter the building and their food is brought out to them by a volunteer.

Prior to Covid 19 the Church had always kept a store cupboard of long-life food to help families in emergencies. The Food Hub that was set up is an extension of this activity and to date they have given out over 400 food parcels since March and provided food for 100 families through the past 7 months.

In March, Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation provided the Church with some funding to establish the food hub. However, this grant has now been utilised. Food parcels cost between £17-£20 per family per week and therefore, this grant would enable the church to provide at least another 100 food parcels to those in need in their local community.

The Grant Panel members agreed to recommend an award of **£2000** which is the maximum grant available for a project that serves one area (i.e. Letchworth)

8.2

Applicant	Samaritans of North Herts and Stevenage
Project	Maintenance costs and IT equipment
Sum requested	£4,830
Total project cost	£4,830
Joint funding	£6,100 - NHDC Discretionary Business Grant £8,000 –POhWER £6,438 – Aviva Community Fundraiser
NHDC Policy met	Yes
Council Priorities	Build thriving and resilient communities

The Samaritans applied for funding initially to upgrade the telephone system. Due to Covid 19 precautions all listening volunteers should be provided with an individual headset, if they move to Bluetooth headsets then an upgrade to the base telephony equipment will also be required. (Basic 30 headsets at £30 =£900).

The application also requested funding for the cost of the phone line, upgrading the PC monitors to make it easier to handle texts and email communications, in addition to £2000 for a new boiler as the current one is due to be replaced although still working.

The Panel felt that the usual telephone line costs and maintenance on items such as the boiler is not what the Coronavirus Support Grant is designed to be used for.

However, the services have seen an increase in demand since the Coronavirus outbreak and the Panel felt that it was essential that volunteers were kept safe. The Panel recommended that the cost of purchasing headsets so that each volunteer could keep their own to minimise cross infection, in addition to upgrading the Monitors is something that they would be willing to fund. The monitors are required as more of the communication is now being undertaken by email and text rather than via conversations on the telephone as is the traditional method with the Samaritans. This should help support a greater number and a broader range of those requiring support.

The headsets would cost £900 and the monitors were £200 each and they wished to purchase two = £400. + £900 + £1,300.

In addition, the Panel wished to support the additional phone line costs and included £200 in relation to that.

The Panel recommended a grant of **£1,500** to the North Herts & Stevenage Samaritans.

Officers will advise the organisation on potential external funding streams that might be suitable to cover the other costs.

8.3 Applicant	Rotary Club of Hitchin Tilehouse (applying on behalf of the Hitchin Mental Health Recovery Team) – HMHRT
Project	Mental Health Support for young people in Hitchin
Sum requested	£14,020.00
Total project cost	£21,520.00
Joint funding	£ 5,000.00 Hitchin Youth Trust £ 2,500.00 Rotary Club of Hitchin Tilehouse
NHDC Policy met	Yes
Council Priorities	Build thriving and resilient communities

Covid 19 has caused additional anxiety in young people, parents and staff. After the return of schools in September it was confirmed by the schools that additional support is needed for staff and parents in order to support the children. Some of the children will also need additional, more intensive help as their anxiety levels may remain high after initial group support. These children will be identified and referred to the services available within this group

Hitchin Youth Trust (HYT) and Hitchin Tilehouse Rotary have already set up a partnership in Hitchin in order to coordinate food provision and the project is running successfully with funding provided from the NHDC Coronavirus Community Support Fund.

Food and Mental Health has been high on the radar since the beginning of the pandemic and they wanted to put something in place to support young people as the situation continues and as life hopefully returns to some sort of normality.

Rotary and HYT had some initial discussions with a representative from the Hitchin Secondary Schools and Primary Schools. They discussed their requirements and the organisations that might be able to provide support. They then invited the organisations and held an initial meeting via Zoom. All the organisations were keen to get involved and offer their support. HYT sent out forms to the organisations for them to complete in order to provide details of their services. These have been shared amongst the group.

They were all keen for there to be minimal overlap and maximum effect. The plan will cover the whole academic year with different phases of support.

To that end HYR and Hitchin Tilehouse Rotary have formed the Hitchin Mental Health Recovery Team.

Hitchin Mental Health Recovery Team are a group of local organisations and charities that recognised the need for additional Mental Health Support for the young people who attend school in Hitchin* on returning to school during the pandemic and after lockdown.

The Groups that form this partnership are:

- Rotary of Hitchin Tilehouse
- Hitchin Partnership CIO (Family Support Service)
- Hitchin Youth Trust
- Grit (Growing Resilience in Teenagers)
- Stand-by-me
- Phase
- Tilehouse Counselling
- Letchworth Centre for Healthy Living
- NESSie

As outlined in the table above; funding has already been applied for and received from Hitchin Youth Trust and Rotary of Hitchin Tilehouse to support this group.

Their aim is to provide support over the academic year and a priority list has been agreed, starting with support for parents and staff so that they are best equipped to support the young people. The intention is that with this approach there will be fewer young people needing intensive individual support which would still be available but hopefully at a reduced number.

Sessions will take place both in Schools, Covid safe venues or remotely via suitable video conferencing. Those young people / children that need support will be identified via the Schools.

The funds will be held by Hitchin Tilehouse Rotary and the project coordinated by HYT in partnership with the above organisations and Hitchin Schools.

**Children attending Hitchin Schools come from a wide catchment area including Letchworth, and the Southern Rural Villages. It is therefore appropriate to consider this application as covering more than one area.*

The Panel, in their meeting on 26th November asked whether the group has sought funding from any other sources externally from NHDC and their partnership. At present this has not been investigated by the group, but officers agreed to advise them on potential funding sources.

The Panel recommended that half the funding required for the Spring and Summer term be provided. This would equate to:

£ 9,665.00 Spring term + £ 5,120.00 Summer term = £14,785 = 50% of which is £7,392

Following discussions with the Service Director: Resources, in consultation with the Executive Member – Finance and IT- Cllr Ian Albert, it was agreed that application should not be assessed as a funding agreement but as the project covers more than one area of the district the maximum amount that could be provided was **£5,000**.

This amount constitutes just over half the cost of the Spring term. Whilst the Council is committed to providing support during the Covid-19 pandemic, it also has to consider when this support period should end. At this stage it is not considered appropriate to commit beyond the end of the financial year/ Easter. Depending on how the local and national situation evolves, it may be possible for the group to make a future application to cover the Summer term. However, they will have already received the expected maximum level of support under the grant criteria

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. Following an urgent delegated decision by the Chief Executive on 3 April 2020¹ the uses of the Reserve have been extended to include “support the response to and reduce the impact of major incidents”. This allows it to be used for discretionary spend in response to Covid-19. The referenced delegated decision also “***noted that any discretionary spend in respect of Covid-19 will be approved by the Service Director: Resources as Budget Manager, in consultation with the Executive Member for Finance and IT***”.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The total of funding recommended by this meeting of the Panel is £8,500 taking the total amount that has been recommended by the grant panel to £84,500

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 All projects that are assigned to the Grant Panel for 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 decision.

14. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

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

15.1 There are no pertinent Environmental Implications associated with any items within this report

16. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Officers have received and approved the grant application, mission statement and accounts. Covid 19 Special Reserve Fund 2020 (Community Grants) Protocol.

NOTIFICATION DATE

4th December 2020

Signature of Executive Member Consulted



Date ...3rd December 2020.....

Signature of Decision Taker



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Call-in does not apply to NON-EXECUTIVE DECISIONS