

RECORD OF DECISION MADE UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY

PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

Any interest to declare/ or conflict and any dispensation granted N/A

SERVICE DIRECTORATE: Resources

1. DECISION TAKEN

The provision of funding of **£59,054** 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 divided between the following applications:

- £4,000 – to Age UK Hertfordshire as outlined in 8.1
- £2,000 – to Headway as outlined in 8.2
- £1,500 – to Keech Hospice Care as outlined in 8.3
- £5,000 – to The Need Project as outlined in 8.4
- £3,500 – to Christians against poverty as outlined in 8.5
- £5,000 – to Homestart Hertfordshire as outlined in 8.6
- £2,504 – to Growing People as outlined in 8.7
- £2,400 – to Howard Garden Social Centre as outlined in 8.8
- £2,000 – to Ickleford Community Larder as outlined in 8.9
- £4,000 – to Letchworth Food Bank as outlined in 8.10
- £18,265 – to Hitchin Food Provision team as outlined in 8.11 (subject to funding agreement)
- £5,000 – to North Herts Emotional Support in Schools as outlined in 8.12
- £1,885 – to Homestart Royston as outlined in 8.13
- £2,000 – to Baldock Coronavirus Support Group as outlined in 8.14

2. DECISION TAKER

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

3. DATE DECISION TAKEN:

26th June 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 Wednesday 17th June.

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

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| Applicant Project | Age UK Herts Providing mobile phones and tablets for vulnerable and socially isolated older people |
| Sum requested | £4,000 |
| Total project cost | £49,996 (county wide) |
| Joint funding | £5000 from Herts Community Foundation each of the 10 Districts across Herts are being asked for £4000 |
| NHDC Policy met | Yes |
| Council Priorities | Build thriving and resilient communities / respond to challenges to the environment. |

This funding is required to continue and provide further support for North Hertfordshire's most vulnerable older people.

Age UK Herts intend to buy IT equipment designed for older people to help them stay connected to each other, to services, to the local community and to improve resilience, both mental and physical and to reduce isolation and loneliness.

A presentation was made by Rosalind Wyllie. This Charity supports older people aiming to build their resilience, alleviate loneliness and isolation and tackle poverty. It is estimated this charity helps up to 3,000 residents across North Herts a year. During Covid-19 they've found a 20% increase in calls and emails from clients concerned about social isolation, mental health and loneliness. As they have had to stop visiting their clients phone calls have become more frequent, volunteers have been calling them two days or more a week, sending parcels of games, setting up zoom activities with clients. They have requested funding to continue supporting North Hertfordshire's most vulnerable. They intend to buy IT equipment designed for older people to help keep them in contact with one another, local community and services. This will help reduce their loneliness and isolation from the outside world.

The Panel unanimously voted to recommend the amount of £4,000 as requested.

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| 8.2 | Applicant Project | Headway Hertfordshire Assisting with an uplift in demand for services due to Coronavirus (salary costs) |
| | Sum requested | £2,000 |
| | Total project cost | £105,000 (county wide) |
| | Joint funding | £7500 agreed from Edward Gostling Foundation, £40,000 bids to other trust and grant bodies Pending applications with Steel Trust and HCC Locality Budget |
| | NHDC Policy met Council Priorities | Yes Build thriving and resilient communities / respond to challenges to the environment |

A presentation was made by John Archer. Headway Hertfordshire provide support and care for those affected by a brain injury both the survivors and their Carers and close family. They offer domestic/family support services, counselling, occupational therapy, educational courses related to the effects of brain injury. Headway are seeing an increase in demand for their services at a time when capacity is stretched, the funding will ensure they are able to keep their staff focused on supporting their clients in North Hertfordshire. The funding would be used to cover front line team costs (salaries).

The Headway team have decided to take a 20% pay cut to keep the service going. They managed not to furlough anybody however decided to drop salaries by 20%. Once funding starts to come in, they will reevaluate that decision.

The Panel agreed unanimously to recommend the full amount of funding requested.

8.3

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| Applicant Project | Keech Hospice Provision of specialist, holistic care to children and their families. |
| Sum requested | £1,500 |
| Total project cost | £441,032 |
| Joint funding | £356,982 Unrestricted funds generated through community fundraising, corporate donations, individual giving, retail and lottery income £450 agreed by West Bletchley Council £82,100 Pending applications to several Trusts and councils |
| NHDC Policy met Council Priorities | Yes Build thriving and resilient communities / respond to challenges to the environment |

Keech Hospice Care is the children's hospice for Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Milton Keynes, and adult hospice for Luton and south Bedfordshire. For children with life-limiting conditions and their families, they provide specialist, holistic care through in-patient unit, community nursing team, day support and supportive care team.

Specialist care and support are provided both at their hospice, based in Luton and out in the community. This includes caring for children at the family home, in school or in hospital.

The current coronavirus crisis in the UK is having a far reaching and negative impact on families caring for children with life-limiting conditions. As the local children's hospice, the need for care services has never been greater. Funding is requested in order to support the children's community nursing team to continue to provide specialist, holistic care to children and their families.

The children they care for are some of the most vulnerable and highly susceptible to the Covid-19 virus. It presents a real threat to their lives and in the weeks to come many more will need our specialist care. The children's community team are continuing to provide care for both families already known and new patients.

Across North Herts they are currently caring for 30 children with life-limiting conditions and their families who all have access to the children's community team. A breakdown of the areas these families are from is: -

- Baldock
- Chesfield
- Codicote
- Ermine
- Hitchin
- Knebworth
- Letchworth
- Royston
- Weston and Sandon

The Panel unanimously agreed to recommend the £1,500 amount of funding as requested.

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| Applicant Project | The Need Project |
| Sum requested | Food provision for those in food poverty £5,000 |
| Total project cost | £13,970 |
| Joint funding | £500 from Tesco Bags for Life and £7,500 pending application from Bedfordshire coronavirus Emergency fund |
| NHDC Policy met | Yes |
| Council Priorities | Be a more welcoming and inclusive Council /Build thriving and resilient communities |

The Need Project was set up in 2007 to provide food parcels and other items such as clothes, white goods, furniture etc to anyone in dire need.

Based in Stotfold on the border of North Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire they serve clients in both areas. In North Herts they cover mainly Letchworth, Hitchin Baldock and Royston currently aiding approximately 27 families in the district. They deliver food parcels on a weekly basis.

The Need Project are currently seeking funding toward purchasing food at this time of pandemic. Last year (4/19-3/20) 169 food parcels were supplied to families and individuals in the areas of Letchworth, Hitchin, Baldock and Royston. Each parcel is valued at £55, which would bring the total value of the parcels to £9,295.

Now with the Covid 19 pandemic, requests for their help are beginning to escalate. As more people fall into food poverty due to Covid 19 related unemployment, referral agencies are advising to expect exponential growth. Currently they have reported a 25% increase in over-all parcel requests from Feb 20 to March 20 as people struggle to survive on a much-reduced income and apply for benefits/universal credits.

In line with the increase in requests already shown up until March 2020, it is anticipated the North Hertfordshire parcel requests will grow by at least 50% if not more. (Calculation 169 x 50% increase = 254 parcels x £55 = £13,970)

The Panel unanimously agreed to recommend the £5,000 amount of funding as requested.

8.5

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| Applicant Project | Christians Against Poverty (Zeo Church) |
| | Assistance to deal with Debt Centre increase in demand. |
| Sum requested | £3,500 |
| Total project cost | £14,000 pa |
| Joint funding | £10,500 via grant applications, fundraising and Zeo donations and money ring fenced for community work gifted by the congregation. |
| NHDC Policy met | Yes |
| Council Priorities | Be a more welcoming and inclusive Council /Build thriving and resilient communities |

The Christians Against Poverty (CAP) Debt Centre continues to operate during the Pandemic via virtual calls and support to Clients. It is anticipated that as part of the economic consequences of social distancing measures and the 3 month lock down, there will be an increased need of services (driven by many households change in financial circumstances, clients being furloughed and particularly those who are self-employed and who are either ineligible for Government help or cannot access it in time. There are many who are having difficulty with rents/mortgages/credit card repayments etc. and those who are in zero-hour contracts). It is a well-established fact how financial pressure, debt and unemployment affect mental health and wellbeing and CAP are renowned for their personal level of service, support and compassion during these times (as supported by Martin Lewis, Money Savings Expert).

The funding requested will allow the service to meet the needs of the Clients by covering operational costs. These include centralised costs £6,000 which include specialist support to administer the repayment plans and client funds and all marketing costs and training materials etc.

The salary for the Debt Centre Manager is not included in this funding request.

This project provides an important service to those who are having financial difficulty, the poor and disadvantaged and those who are recently affected financially due to Coronavirus. This includes families and their dependents.

In the previous year, 200 residents of North Herts benefitted from CAP services and these included residents from Hitchin, surrounding villages and Royston.

The Debt Coaches ordinarily visit clients in their home and the base is Zeo Centre, Bedford Road, Hitchin, Herts, SG5 1HF.

The Panel agreed unanimously to recommend the £3,500 funding as requested.

8.6

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| Applicant Project | Home-Start Hertfordshire Assistance with the general costs of supporting 23 vulnerable families across North Herts. |
| Sum requested | £5,000 |
| Total project cost | £11,500 |
| Joint funding | £500 donations, fundraising and corporate income |
| NHDC Policy met | Yes |
| Council Priorities | Build thriving and resilient communities. |

Home-Start are a local charity which provides early intervention to support families with at least one child aged under 5. The charity believe that every parent should have the support they need to give their children the best possible start in life. Volunteer Family Mentors visit families in their own home, building trusted relationships and providing focused support that is tailored to the family's individual needs. The families they support face challenging times, dealing with a range of issues including poor mental health, isolation, deprivation, domestic abuse and post-natal illness.

Home-Start are currently supporting 33 families and 76 children in North Herts.

Baldock – 5 families

Hitchin – 10 families

Letchworth – 17 families (Letchworth Heritage Foundation have already funded 10).

Southern Rural – 1 family

A presentation was made by Chris Dranse. The group focuses on early intervention in families with children under 5 years old. It works with volunteers from the local community on a range of issues including stress, mental health, etc. Currently more than 60% of their interventions are related to mental health and isolation. Most of the volunteers are working remotely, signposting to other agencies where relevant, such as foodbanks: they undertake to deliver food where clients don't have transport.

Referrals come from Social workers, health visitors, school staff or self-referrals. Homestart expect an increase in referrals, but there's a drop-in income through COVID-19 and indirectly from corporate sponsors.

Noted that early intervention can forestall later issues arising, issues which may be harder and more costly to resolve later.

It was agreed to recommend an award of £5,000, as requested.

8.7

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| Applicant Project | Growing People Assistance with the general costs of an essential adapted horticultural programme to support adults with mental health issues which have greatly increased due to Covid-19. |
| Sum requested | £14,000 or a contribution towards this sum |
| Total project cost | £14,030 |
| Joint funding | £5,000 Roerig Trust – expected imminently £9,822 second part of two-year lottery funding £2,880 personal budget payments where claimable £600 fund raising. |
| NHDC Policy met | Yes |
| Council Priorities | Build thriving and resilient communities; Respond to challenges in the environment |

The social connection which grows within regular therapy sessions is a vital part of the therapeutic process, for some it provides their only community contact during the week. Video conferencing offers the opportunity for this group comradery and mutual support to continue particularly for those who are housebound. We have developed a short informal course-based approach, which will enable content to be reused with different groups. So far therapists have developed an 8-week video conferencing option which now needs to be reviewed and updated before it can be offered to a wider community of housebound people.

Over the last month Growing People have developed a new coronavirus programme to keep in touch with gardeners via regular phone, text and email contact. They also have a private Facebook group and are providing a hard copy newsletter for those without access to IT equipment. A few of their more motivated gardeners have made use of the Growing People gardens to take exercise in the form of allotment gardening. For those who are unable to do this, the organisation is offering simple gardening materials for home based growing. These materials are adaptable to the gardeners' circumstances e.g. window ledge, balcony etc.

The charity believes that their work provides vital support to the individuals concerned and may be saving lives. Rather than furloughing staff, Growing People took the difficult decision to fund this work from their reserves. This has left the charity financially vulnerable. Therefore, the funding being applied for will enable Growing People to continue this work to support gardeners and to develop a regular group video conferencing scheme.

For the next 6 months, it is estimated the project will need £14,030. The lottery grant of £9,822 was allocated to cover initial cost of the video conferencing programme to respond to Covid-19 needs and will cover 3 group therapy sessions plus materials when gardeners are able to return.

£2,880 of personal payments (over a 6-month period) relies on every gardener attending the sessions.

£600 is the potential funds that could be brought in over the next 6 months by selling plants; though usual fundraising events have been cancelled.

Due to an issue with the Modern.Gov system some of the panel members had been unable to see the correct documents for this application during the meeting.

Officers had resubmitted the report on this application but only the previous version was visible to some of the members.

The Panel were therefore only able to make a recommendation on the documents available to them which outlined an amount requested of £2,504

A presentation was made by Alison Shersby. This is a charity providing gardening therapy for currently 25 clients, or whom around 50% have mental health or memory issues; 20 of them are from North Hertfordshire. There are 25 staff. Before COVID19 Growing People provided 3 x 3hr sessions, suspended through the lock down, but it is hoped to re-start these sessions in July. In the meantime, sessions have proceeded with video conferencing, frequent telephone contact and social media platforms. The existing garden has been maintained where possible, and the output – fruit and vegetables, is shared around.

It was agreed to recommend an award of £2,504 as requested in their first application.. However officers will liaise with the organisation in order to resubmit the application with updated figures, in order to consider any further funding for Growing People at the next available panel meeting.

8.8

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| Applicant | Howard Garden Social and Day Care Centre |
| Project | Assistance with the general costs |
| Sum requested | £2,400 |
| Total project cost | £2,400 |
| Joint funding | £0 |
| NHDC Policy met | Yes |
| Council Priorities | Build thriving and resilient communities. |

Howard Gardens Social and Day Care Centre has been operating since 1953 and provides a safe place for isolated individuals aged 55 and upwards to socialise and engage in activities. The centre is a relaxed, friendly environment where clients, staff and volunteers get on really well.

Howard Gardens provide refreshments and a hot two course meal cooked on the premises. Many clients live alone, and the meal provided by the centre is therefore their only hot meal of the day as some are unable to cook for themselves.

The centre affords activities including bingo, seated keep fit, knit and natter, karaoke, a gardening club, table tennis and much more. Staff also offer information that will help to improve client's quality of life and signposting to other services where appropriate.

The centre generates income by hiring out their space to local community groups.

Although, Howard Gardens raise over 70% of their annual expenditure themselves, they also rely on funding from HCC, NHDC and LGCHF to make up the final 30%.

During the Covid-19 crisis the centre's in-house activities have ceased and staff have adapted their offering to an outreach service.

A grant from NHDC would allow the day centre to maintain a service for day care members and support them in keeping their independence during this crisis.

The centre is currently providing an adapted support package during the crisis, this involves:

- Providing an outreach service for food supplies, signposting and activities to support mental health during the enforced isolation. The centre continues to supply food to those in financial difficulty and is working in partnership with other local organisations to source supplies. The grant requested will assist with the cost of fuel for deliveries.
- Creating and supplying activity packs one of which will go out in early May and the second in the first half of June. These packs will be tailored specifically to the needs of clients and will include a 'This is Me' pack for carers and members to fill in together. Information gathered from the This is Me task will form the basis of the second packs.
- Introducing a WhatsApp group for carers and which is updated regularly and encourages families to ask for help and provider peer support.
- Offering signposting to other Hertfordshire organisations who can offer specialist help and continuing to work in partnership with local organisations where possible.

The centre noted that currently their accounts appear to look particularly healthy which is largely due to a rare legacy we received last year from a service user; however this legacy is the only buffer they have against uncertain future funding. Currently there is a threat of free transport for clients being removed which would make it impossible for their vulnerable service users to continue to use the service. This would create social isolation for them and place an additional burden on other social care funding and it is essential that we keep a part of the legacy to ensure we can continue to run – withdrawal of transport would mean closure if we could not step in with our own funding in the interim.

The award of this grant will support an outreach service during the Covid-19 crisis and support members and their carers during the period of enforced isolation. It will help to reduce the risk of mental health issues through visits and check ins. It will also enable the centre to continue to provide food for the members therefore maintaining their independence.

There was no one available to present on behalf of this organisation however Cllr Mike Rice and Cllr Sue Ngwala both spoke in favour of the application.

The Panel agreed to recommend an award of £2,400, as requested.

8.9

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| Applicant Project | Ickleford Community Larder Assistance with the general costs such as purchase of food, delivery costs and promotional materials |
| Sum requested | £2,000 |
| Total project cost | £2,450 |
| Joint funding | £50 Village Fundraising, £400 Parish Council Grant |
| NHDC Policy met | Yes |
| Council Priorities | Build thriving and resilient communities. |

An Ickleford resident set up Ickleford Community Larder at the beginning of May in response to the Covid-19 outbreak as it was felt that many residents might be having difficulty obtaining and affording food. The Community Larder is open for 2 hours, 3 times per week. So far over 1,700 meals have been distributed to residents from Ickleford, Holwell and Hitchin.

This service has already shown that many residents have struggled to pay for basic items such as food. This is due to financial difficulties due to losing their jobs, being furloughed with 20% pay cuts and receiving no work from zero hours jobs with no prospect of finding new work until lockdown is lifted.

The funding requested is to cover general running costs of the Community Larder for things such as; food stocks, PPE, cleaning supplies, promotional materials and volunteers travel costs.

The Panel recommended a funding award of £2,000

8.10

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| Applicant Project | Letchworth Foodbank Purchase of supermarket food vouchers. |
| Sum requested | £4,000 |
| Total project cost | £10,350 per month |
| Joint funding | HCC Locality Budget Cllr Hone £500, Settle Group £2,000, LGCHF £15,000 |
| NHDC Policy met | Yes |
| Council Priorities | Build thriving and resilient communities. |

The Foodbank's main activity is to supply food to individuals and families who would otherwise struggle to obtain it.

The Letchworth Foodbank supplies provisions to those in need in Letchworth, Hitchin, Baldock and the neighbouring villages.

The Foodbank also provide support to people who find themselves in fuel poverty.

The Letchworth Foodbank warehouse is located in Letchworth and distribution centres are based in Community venues in Hitchin Letchworth and Baldock.

The foodbank is under the umbrella of the Trussel Trust and is completely staffed by volunteers.

When the lock down happened many of the volunteers who assisted in the Warehouse and with the food distribution had to self isolate as they were aged over 70 and therefore at more risk of contracting Coronavirus. This made it difficult for the Foodbank to handle food parcels and in addition the donations from the public dropped as people stayed away from Supermarkets, visiting less frequently and with reduced incomes could not make donations so easily.

The Letchworth Foodbank made the decision to provide Supermarket Vouchers rather than food parcels. This is not a long-term strategy and they intend to return to providing food parcels as the social distancing measures are gradually lifted.

The Foodbank work closely with their referral agencies Settle, Citizens Advice, Salvation Army, Doctors' Surgeries, Schools, community groups and local charities.

The Coronavirus has seen the demand for the foodbank double since the lock down.

A presentation was made by Paddy Byrne. The Food Bank has been in existence for 7 years: the COVID outbreak caused the supply of food from supermarkets to dry up and the Food Bank switched from direct food provision to the provision of food vouchers, currently running at £1,600 per week. The Food Bank will resume direct food provision on July 3rd, as before to Hitchin, Letchworth, Baldock and surrounding villages. It also covers fuel poverty, with awards of £40 for gas and/or electricity, working with the CAB, Job Centres etc. It receives donations from individuals, Settle, Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation and the Salvation Army. Financially the Food Bank's future is uncertain after 3 months.

The Community Engagement Team Leader noted that the Food Bank had not requested a specific sum, but she had indicated £4,000 which would cover rent and utility costs.

The Panel asked; "What is the current level of demand? It is currently twice the "normal" level. It is hoped to be able to return to "normal" levels, but future uncertain beyond three months.

It was agreed to recommend an award of £4,000.

8.11

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| Applicant | Hitchin Food Provision Team |
| Project | Purchase of supermarket food vouchers. |
| Sum requested | £18,265 |
| Total project cost | £46,500 |
| Joint funding | £10,735 from fundraising, £7,500 from Christmas fund raising Appeal + £10,000 application pending. |
| NHDC Policy met | Yes |
| Council Priorities | Build thriving and resilient communities. |

The Hitchin Food Provision Team is a group of local organisations and charities that normally come together to provide vulnerable families and individuals in the area with

a Christmas Hamper each year. They came together at the beginning of March to provide help during the Covid-19 crisis.

Groups:

- Hitchin & District Round Table No 150
- Rotary of Hitchin Tilehouse
- Hitchin Partnership CIO (Family Support Service)
- Hitchin Volunteer Army
- Hitchin Youth Trust
- Zeo Church

The Hitchin Tilehouse Rotary will hold the funding for this partnership project.

Officers suggest as this is clearly a cooperative project that this grant be considered for a 12-month funding agreement.

Working in collaboration with Hitchin Food Bank (Trussell Trust) and Feed Up Warm Up and Caritas UK Funding has been received from most of the groups involved. The weekly cost is now around £2,000.

The funding will be spent on providing families in need with supermarket vouchers to pay for food during the Covid-19 pandemic.

They are providing e-vouchers for supermarkets (they are also able to post vouchers if families do not have access to email). The vouchers vary from £20 to £80 depending on the number in the household and their need. Families are given a choice of supermarket where possible to ensure ease of use. The Family Support Team of Hitchin Partnership have been phoning the families weekly to provide a welfare check and support or signposting if necessary. They have built up relationships with these families and feedback is good. During the phone call they ascertain the need for that week and if needed the family will be added to the list to receive a supermarket voucher. Some of these families are passed over to Feed Up Warm Up to receive a hot meal on a Monday evening and/or a food parcel, but they do not get these in addition to a voucher, this would be instead of a voucher. The rest of the team are then able to place orders and send out the vouchers. We now have 87 families that have been referred.

Families in need from Hitchin and surrounding villages. All are from North Hertfordshire.

They are supporting those families that have found themselves in financial difficulty due to the crisis; loss of employment, significantly reduced hours, furloughed, waiting for Universal Credits. They have a referral process in place for Schools and other agencies (e.g. Homestart Herts and pre-schools) to refer families and we also accept self-referrals.

There are currently 87 families on the list, but this could increase.

The vouchers are currently issued weekly, but they are due to switch to bi-weekly to encourage better financial planning and allow for their resources to have a break. They will still have vouchers available for emergency referrals and the opportunity to forward to the Food Bank or Feed Up Warm Up.

Covid 19 has caused financial hardship for some families in our area due to loss of employment, significantly reduced hours, being furloughed, waiting for Universal Credits etc. School closures and isolation at home has led to families struggling to provide enough food for their family. Food poverty is not something some of these families have experienced before.

A presentation was made by Sue Watkinson. The organisation had an 8-year history as Christmas Hampers, extended last year to meals at Easter and in the summer holidays. There are currently 87 families in receipt of assistance, identified by referrals from Settle, food bank, Homestart, social workers or self-referrals. Contact is maintained with clients through weekly phone calls to assess demand, it being recognised that aside from food there is also need for nappies, shampoo, etc. The organisation needs additional support from summer through to Christmas.

The panel discussed how the grant funding would be paid i.e.: in a lump sum, or in tranche payments. The Community Engagement Team Leader stated that she would be monitoring the grant. A funding agreement will have clear outcomes stated on it and payments will be made at agreed intervals to ensure the funding is utilised in the most effective way.

The Panel members agreed (with one abstention) to recommend a Funding Agreement of £18,265 as requested.

In reviewing the recommendation, the Service Director: Resources (in consultation with the Executive Member for Finance and IT) noted that there were a number of applications for food provision groups covering similar geographical areas. Whilst it was acknowledged that it was likely that each household would probably only be receiving support from one group, it is still important that support processes are efficient and do not create administrative duplication. As this is the largest application and the proposal is for a funding agreement, this funding award should be contingent on the group demonstrating how they can work with the other groups that have received funding and avoiding duplication. This may mean that the total amount awarded is less than that requested.

There are several organisations within the District supporting those in need with food provision. Some via rescued and / or donated food, some by providing supermarket vouchers. Having a range of provision provides choice to those in most need.

The Community Engagement Team coordinate a Food Provision Networking Group to which all these organisations belong. The Networking Group provides the opportunity to coordinate services to avoid any doubling up of provision.

The various organisations tend to target different demographics to the Hitchin Food Provision Team who specifically target families that are in need.

8.12

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| Applicant Project | North Herts Emotional Support in Schools Project Support with costs for running on-line and telephone counselling services |
| Sum requested | £1,300 |
| Total project cost | £2,000 |
| Joint funding | Own Funds |
| NHDC Policy met | Yes |
| Council Priorities | Build thriving and resilient communities. |

North Herts Emotional Support in Schools Service (NESSIE) is seeking funding to assist with costs for running on-line and telephone support. This service would normally be delivered face to face but due to the Coronavirus Pandemic and current

social distancing rules, NESSIE has adapted their support methods so that their service is still available to those in need.

This work is targeting specific families who will struggle to get their children back to education. Specifically, because of being 'hard to reach', having experienced trauma or where the child has a neurodiversity. Other counselling organisations don't tend to work with these families, but it is a specialist area of NESSIE.

NESSIE work with children and families where there is no other pathway for support and the families are often at risk of breakdown or missing education. Schools have already identified families that they wish NESSIE to support.

A presentation was made by Rachel Lambie. Nessie was set up in 2015 with 2 volunteer committee members, 9 full time staff and 11 part time staff to provide counselling and support to families in difficulty, with one or two sessions provided free of charge. Numbers have risen during COVID-19, with currently 5 groups of families, but 11 requests for help received in the last week. Most of these are around anxiety issues from the relaxation of lockdown. Lockdown rules were explicit: vaguer rules now are generating more calls.

The Panel members asked the following questions:

Noted one or two sessions free of charge. What happens after that? Clients can buy in, but the reality is that they have no money. NESSIE wish to continue to provide free sessions.

What's the "bought-in" cost? £50/session. There's no HCC contribution. Cllr Billing noted that she had not received any request for funding. Nessie also provide on-line aid for anxiety issues. Cllr Rice noted that DSPL had been cut in North Herts. Cllr Ngwala noted that COVID-19 was stressful for parents of children in education and that there was a big waiting list for adolescent clients, 46% of whom in North Herts were boys, an unusually high figure.; schools can't afford the provision. It was suggested that the applicant apply to all the HCC members in North Herts. The Community Engagement Team will advise and support the applicant to do this.

NESSIE originally submitted their application to cover their services in just the Royston area, which is why they requested £1300. However, following their presentation where they explained to the Panel that their services cover all the schools across the whole of the North Hertfordshire district.

The Panel requested that the organisation be provided with a higher level of funding than requested and therefore, it was agreed to recommend £5,000 and suggested that the lack of provision be investigated further.

8.13

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| Applicant | Home Start Royston, Buntingford & South Cambridgeshire |
| Project | Project Support with costs for running on-line and telephone counselling services for 2 families in Royston, including 2 laptops, zoom licenses |
| Sum requested | £1,885 |
| Total project cost | £1,885 (Specific to Royston Families) |
| Joint funding | None |
| NHDC Policy met | Yes |

Council Priorities

Build thriving and resilient communities

Home Start have been supporting local families for over 36 years and are one of over 200 local Home-Start schemes affiliated to the national charity Home-Start UK, which provides national operational benchmarks and quality control. Home Starts Objectives are:

- Reduce the pressure on families that leads to mental health difficulties
- Reduce parental isolation by facilitating involvement in local groups and services
- Improve outcomes for children in terms of mental and physical health, education and relationships with parents and teachers.

Since the Coronavirus Pandemic the group has needed to move to online providing telephone counselling services rather than face to face. There are cost implications for this and the group is seeking funding to assist with the purchase of 2 laptops to be used by Home Start trained Volunteers and for Zoom conferencing licenses. Home start Royston, Buntingford and South Cambridgeshire will be supporting 2 families from Royston with the funding requested and the support will be for a 20-week period. Home Start is a registered charity and has been operating since 1983 and is made up of 9 Volunteer Committee Members, 6 Part Time Paid Staff and 39 Volunteers. The Coronavirus has had a major impact on the group so much so that the group is using its reserves to remain operational. The group also relies on fundraising activities which again have been curtailed during the Pandemic. This funding will enable them to offer services during the Pandemic and to ensure that the needs of 2 Royston based families are met.

A presentation was made by Amanda Hourmand, outlining home visiting being provided remotely, at a level of 2 hours per week by telephone, currently supporting 5 families in Royston. Support funding was needed for 2 Royston Families to receive our Remote Home-Visiting Service, 2 Home-Start laptop computers, and a Zoom Video Conference App Annual Licence for our Remote Home-Visiting Co-ordinator.

It was agreed to recommend an award of £1,885 as requested.

8.14

Applicant Project**Baldock Coronavirus Support Group**

Support with costs for providing food boxes to those in need, a hardship fund for victims of domestic violence and fund to support projects to enhance mental health

**Sum requested
Total project cost
Joint funding**

£2,000

£2,000

This is a new group set up in response to the Pandemic so no match funding available currently

**NHDC Policy met
Council Priorities**

Yes

Build thriving and resilient communities

The Baldock Coronavirus Support Group was set up in March at the outbreak of the Pandemic. It is an unregistered charity which is made up of 13 Volunteer Committee Members and 160 volunteers. The main activities of the group are:

Supporting those self-isolating due to vulnerability, shielding due to pre-existing medical conditions or suffering from COVID-19 by providing volunteers to assist with shopping and delivering prescriptions.

Alleviating hardship by providing volunteers to distribute fresh and staple goods food boxes to individuals and families who have had their incomes significantly reduced because of the lockdown, are suffering from the virus or are in the women's refuge because of domestic violence.

Supporting people whose mental health is deteriorating because of loneliness, domestic violence, job losses or other emotional concerns by providing a 'Listening Service', whereby trained volunteers enable people to talk about their problems and / or signpost them to the relevant agencies.

'Connecting Communities' is a project to combat loneliness, whereby primary school children are linked with older people and encouraged to send letters and drawings to those who are self-isolating or shielding.

'Bringing Baldock Back' has four areas of activity:

Supporting people facing job losses by helping them with preparing and updating CVs, interview skills

Supporting businesses through mentoring, provision of food and financial advice.

Combating mental health by encouraging and promoting opportunities to join sports and activities clubs. Offering small grants to anyone who is unable to pay for membership of these clubs or activities

Supporting an art and fashion exhibition/competition for young people aged 11 to 18 to reflect their time in lockdown and for elderly people who are self-isolating to reconnect them to the town.

Publish newsletters and leaflets to communicate our services and other information to Baldock and the surrounding villages. The Facebook page and website also provides frequent updates on activities.

A presentation was made by Vivienne Reed. This organisation was set up in March 2020, to provide food, mental health support, assist with job searches, provide financial advice and provide a youth art project.

It has delivered food and prescriptions to those with diminished resources through COVID 19, starting with 10 families and now 33. Noted that this number is dynamic and not the same families over time. HCC will cease food provision in late June, hoping Orange Tree pub will continue to assist and support with fresh food. BCSG is discussing transition and its implications, seeking to upskill clients through mentoring; has provided PPE to local businesses, supported Women's Refuge, based in Baldock with food and home-schooling equipment, and intend to deliver a mobile mural art project for young people.

Councillor Muir declared an interest and abstained from the vote. He indicated his support for the organisation.

The Panel agreed to recommend an award of £2,000, as requested.

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 Special Reserve was set up a number of years ago. The total of funding recommended by the Panel equates to £59,054. This is the first tranche of funding.

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 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 decision.

14. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

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

15. 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

¹ <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/y%20Item%201b%20-%20Third%20Quarter%20Revenue%20Monitoring%202019-20.pdf>

26th June 2020

Signature of Executive Member Consulted

Date

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. J. P.' or similar, written in a cursive style.

Signature of Decision Taker

Call-in does not apply to NON-EXECUTIVE DECISIONS