

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
[NO]

Any conflict with any Member of the Panel and the bodies concerned **[NO]** *If yes indicate who and what below*

SERVICE DIRECTORATE: Legal and Community

1. DECISION TAKEN

1.1 The approval of **Community Facility Capital Grant** funding of:

1.1.1 **£14,098** to **Breachwood Green Preschool** to create a sheltered area for the outside play area of the preschool as outlined in 6.1

1.2 The approval of **Health Protect Board (HPB)** funding awards to the following bodies:

1.2.1 **£15,651** to **Howard Garden Social Centre** towards funds to partly cover the cost of hiring a Centre manager on a 12-month fixed-term contract as outlined in 6.2

1.2.2 **£19,327** to **Citizens Advice North Hertfordshire** towards a Post-Covid Rural Outreach Project as outlined in 6.3

1.2.3 **£15,022** to **PoetsIN** for delivery of a portfolio of creative and proven programmes, wellbeing workshops and mentoring, supporting people with mental health issues living in North Hertfordshire as outlined in 6.4

2. DECISION TAKER

The Executive Member for Community Engagement in consultation with the Service Director – Legal and Community.

3. DATE DECISION TAKEN:

1.9.22

4. REASON FOR DECISION

4.1 The **District Wide Revenue and Capital Grants Panel** held on 17th August 2022 considered the funding applications from the groups listed above and recorded the recommendations to the Executive Member for Community Engagement for the formal commitment of capital funds to the facility listed above, and revenue funding provided via the Health Protection Board to the three organisations listed above, via the delegated authority process, subject to the considerations noted at item 6 below.

4.2 The Policy and Community Engagement Team Leader applied to the Health Protection Board for funding available to assist the voluntary and community sector organisations in the North Herts District to assist the community to recover from the effect of the COVID pandemic. A business case was submitted requesting £50,000 which targeted the HPB criteria of:

1. *Targeted interventions for specific sections of the local community and workplaces*
2. *Harnessing capacity within local sectors (e.g., voluntary, academic, commercial)*

The business case matched the HPB local spending priority of *'Supporting communities to transition to live and work safely with Covid with a focus on those residents who are at higher risk of severe illness or have less confidence in returning to everyday activities.'*

Our business case for this round was accepted and NHC received £50,000 to provide grants to organisations supporting North Herts residents *to 'enable and encourage groups providing social engagement for older people and young people, in addition to those in Rural Areas who have not been able to access services, activities, support, and advice.'*

5. CONSULTATION WITH MEMBERS

5.1 Consultation on all grant applications for consideration took place with the Members of the District Wide Capital and Revenue Grant Panel at a virtual meeting held on 17 August 2022. All the grant applicants made presentations to the Panel in support of their applications and answered any questions the Panel raised in relation to the grant funding request. The decisions outlined in this report are based on the Panel's recommendations.

5.2 The amounts requested by the three groups equated to £49,379 leaving an amount of £621 from the £50,000 provided by the HPB. Under the terms of the HPB grants the minimum grant must be £1000. For this reason, the panel recommended that the remaining £621 be split equally between the three applicants to enable them to expand the provision they have applied for. Therefore £207 has been added to the amount requested in each application. The alternative would be to return £621 to the HPB.

5.3 The grants considered at the meeting held on 17 August 2022 are as follows:

5.3.1 **Community Facility Capital Grant Funding** to Breachwood Green Preschool for the full amount requested.

5.3.2 **Health Protection Board Covid Recovery** funding to Howard Garden Social Centre, Citizens Advice North Hertfordshire and PoetsIN for the full amount as requested in their applications plus £207.

6. APPLICATION DETAILS

6.1 Breachwood Green Preschool

Applicant Project	Breachwood Green Preschool Create a sheltered area for the outside play area of the pre-school
Sum requested	£14,098. This is in line with current quote received from the canopy company. This amount may increase after decision is made due to current economic climate. If it does increase, we would consider funding a reasonable higher amount, in line with material increases
Total project cost	£15,663.60
Match funding	£783.18 – Village Hall Committee £783.18 – Kings Walden Parish Council
Previous support	£250 rural grant in 2018
NHDC Policy met??	
Council Objectives	People First and Brighter Future Together

Breachwood Green Preschool would like to install a wall mounted canopy to create a sheltered area for the outside play area.

Currently there is no outside shade or shelter from the elements. This restricts the use of the outside area and the opportunity for the children to play outside which benefits their physical and mental development. A canopy would also provide shelter for outdoor equipment which is currently being damaged by the weather.

The Preschool have tried many types of shades, such as a sail shade and gazebos, which have all been unsuccessful. They are in real need of a permanent structure which will cope with the elements and doesn't use up valuable floor space.

Having a canopy all year round would allow:

- opportunity for free-flow play, which is an Ofsted requirement.
- attendees to safely play from the sun and rain.
- children to be more active outside and for longer lengths of time.

This project would also allow for the preschool to hold the maximum children allowed which is 19. Currently due to the restrictions of the usage of the outdoor space they are limiting the number to 12 per session.

The project would also support the Village Hall, which it's connected to, as the new canopy will attract new children/parents to attend the local preschool. This would provide revenue for the Village Hall and promote the usage of the hall for fundraising events.

Members present voted to recommend that Breachwood Green Preschool receive the full amount as requested of £14,098 from the Community Facility Capital Grant fund.

6.2 Howard Garden Social Centre

Applicant Project	Howard Garden Social and Day Care Centre Hiring a Centre manager on a 12-month fixed-term contract, IT equipment and additional training for staff.
Sum requested	£15,444
Total project cost	£21,444
Match funding	£500 – Fundraising £500 – Reserves PENDING £5,000 – HCF grant
Previous support	£2,400 – Covid Community Support Fund 2020
NHDC Policy met	Yes
Council objectives	People First and Brighter Future Together

Howard Garden Social and Day Care Centre is an organisation that has provided essential companionship and support for the lonely and elderly residents of Letchworth, and the surrounding areas, for the last six decades. The residents come to the centre for activities, hot meals and to socialise.

If successful with their application, they wish to use these funds to partly cover the cost of hiring a Centre manager on a 12-month fixed-term contract.

This individual would be employed for 20 hours a week, with the primary goal of enhancing and expanding the current services provided at Howard Garden Social and Day Care Centre. This would be through actively engaging different service providers to reach new members, particularly those suffering social isolation through the effects of Covid, and/or those living in more rural areas who don't have easy access to these types of services.

The Centre manager would drive efficiencies across the service. This will allow them to increase membership and the overall income for The Centre. The Centre Manager will also support key risk mitigation, which will help them operate more efficiently and safely as capacity increases.

The services are provided directly for elderly members of the community (Aged 60+). Their service also provides essential respite for carers of elderly individuals, who can become socially isolated and constrained by their care duties. There is also a need to support elderly members of the community living in rural areas who do not have easy access to many facilities. Supporting the needs of the elderly community is the primary objective of Howard Garden

Social and Day Care Centre. The impact of Covid has left many elderly individuals socially isolated, which has had devastating consequences for their physical and mental health.

Currently, the service benefits approx. 40 active members, and runs 4 days a week. They would hope to gain an additional 20/30 members and expand their services to run over 5 days. The manager could also help coordinate the reopening of other social clubs. This has the potential to benefit a further 100+ through the reopening of clubs and activities during the afternoon and evenings.

They plan to advertise their services through social media platforms (i.e. Facebook, own website, etc) and by building strong connections with other organisations, such as: Adult Social Services, doctors surgeries, Herts Help, Settle and connecting with transport providers, such as Lynx.

The appointment of a Centre Manager will allow them to focus more on the needs of their members, reach more people, and increase Centre income to create greater financial stability for the centre in the future. A Centre manager will also be able to build stronger connections and relationships with other service providers. These synergies can create a greater benefit to the wider community as a whole.

Vote to recommend that Howard Garden Daycare and Social Centre receive the full amount as requested of £15,444 and an additional £207 making the total funding provided £15,651:

Result: Unanimous vote in favour of

6.3 Citizens Advice North Hertfordshire

Applicant Project	Citizens Advice North Hertfordshire (CANH) Expansion of post-Covid Rural Outreach Project
Sum requested	£19,120
Total project cost	£21,120
Match funding	£5,000 – Frank Litchfield Foundation (£4,000 of this will have been spent on set up prior to the 12-month project) £1,000 – HCC locality grant Steve Jarvis
Previous support NHDC Policy met	3-year funding agreement Yes
Council objectives	People First and Brighter Future Together

CANH is an established advice organisation with many years of experience advising and advocating for local residents. CANH has flexed its operations and learned a great deal as a result of COVID in how to deliver their services. They provide signposting, assisted information, advice and casework via telephone, email, webchat, video, and in-person. They also campaign on a national and local level to make policies and practices fairer for everyone. The ultimate aim is to build up to offering a full suite of their services and activities in all areas of the district.

COVID has fundamentally changed both the way that potential clients want to engage with CANH, and the volume and complexity of client issues. It is apparent that as a direct result of the pandemic, many clients are presenting with more complex needs and multiple impacting issues. More clients are now presenting with debt and benefit issues with a compounding and limiting mental health issues in the background. The physical symptoms of long term COVID have also affected people's health and their ability to work and travel as normal.

Psychologically many people are still unwilling to use public transport. Financially, because of COVID and the ever-increasing energy prices; many people cannot afford to drive, use public transport, or pay for a taxi to visit the CANH offices. Complex issues are significantly harder to address through video or telephone calls, and require face-to-face engagement, hence their desire to now extend/expand the Rural Outreach Project.

- The number of issues CANH dealt with in Q1-3 2021/22 is up by 11% on the same period last year
- The number of contacts with clients that CANH need to have to resolve an issue is up by 16% on pre-pandemic numbers.
- COVID has presented clients with a wide range of financial challenges. They are dealing with 38% more benefits issues this year than last year, and debt queries have risen by 8%. Both these enquiry areas have been impacted by Covid-19 as well as being increasingly exacerbated by the cost-of-living crisis.

The need to ensure that clients in rural areas have equal access to advice services, without the costs and anxieties of travelling having to visit the CANH offices.

Project Aims:

- Raise awareness of CANH and the services they provide.
- Ensure that everyone who has suffered due to the COVID pandemic is able to access services.
- Increase CANH client numbers from rural locations in North Hertfordshire.
- Ensure that they respond to local need in areas that have relatively high levels of vulnerable residents and isolation.
- Conduct focussed community sessions enabling larger groups of people e.g., provision of energy saving, maximising income, and scams workshops.

Project planned outcomes:

- Address the rising issues resulting from COVID and the cost-of-living crisis for those in rural areas and increase client numbers from rural locations in North Hertfordshire. The baseline is 12% of total clients and they would like to see the rural % increasing in the year.
- Increase understanding of the needs of rural areas and create a community engagement plan to use going forward.
- Increase community engagement volunteer resource going forward.

COVID had a wide-reaching impact in the CANH community, and the team are seeing many clients that would not traditionally use the services of Citizens Advice. The cost-of-living crisis caused by inflation and soaring energy prices is also impacting all communities. By intervening at an early stage, they believe CANH can prevent issues building over time. They see this role as investment and excellent value for money both now and for the future.

CANH have launched the project with a part-time role of 1 day per week, using funds from a grant by the Frank Litchfield Foundation and £1,000 HCC Locality Grant from Cllr Steve Jarvis. If CANH are successful in securing HPB funding, the coordinator will be employed for a further 12 months for two days a week, with the aim of recruiting a new team of volunteers to make this rural outreach service a permanent service. Following a review of the project they can then assess if paid resource would be necessary to permanently run the rural outreach project. Using the project as a 12-month pilot to gather valuable data to build an additional business case for a larger funding application in the future.

The project co-ordinator has already seen evidence of need for their work in the community e.g., village nurseries are requesting sessions for local parents who are finding it difficult to travel to their towns to seek their advice. Additionally, Parish Councils have been keen for them to attend community gatherings to advise on maximising income and scams awareness – the latter proving a real issue for elderly rural populations.

Extending the contract of the project coordinator now, will enable the project to grow faster and to have a greater presence and impact in the rural community. COVID has had a universal impact on clients, and CANH would like to ensure equal access to all rural residents of North Hertfordshire. Just 12 % CANH clients are from rural areas, yet the North Herts rural population is 17% with pockets of rural deprivation, therefore it is clear there is an urgent need for advice services in Rural locations. The duration of the project/hours for the role will be flexed depending on the final amount of funding received.

HPB funding would also enable CANH to produce publicity materials and purchase laptops (1 x personal laptop for the project co-ordinator and 2 x laptops for the new volunteers) to ensure remote access to CANH's advice information, referral processes, policies and procedures. The volunteers will share the laptops depending on their home locations, days

worked, and locations visited in order to make the best practical use of them) It is important to emphasise that all information stored on the laptop will only be accessible via 2-step authentication to a secure remote desktop. All their staff and volunteers undergo GDPR and Information Assurance training before they have access to their systems. Where it is possible and practical to do so, they try to purchase refurbished IT equipment via their IT support company - to ensure best value for money and for sustainability reasons. Supervision and management support for this project will be provided remotely from their main office in Letchworth.

Many North Herts residents have suffered both financially and emotionally because of COVID and are now beginning to come to terms with the long-term consequences for their financial position and their physical and mental health. This project will encourage residents to approach CANH; creating links with parish councils, village halls, and existing rural groups to raise awareness of CANH and their services and develop opportunities to provide advice appointments and preventative workshops in the community.

Vote to recommend that Citizens Advice North Herts (CANH) receive the full amount as requested of £19,120 and an additional £207 making the total funding provided £19,327:

Result: Unanimous in vote in favour of

6.4 PoetsIN

Applicant Project	The Creative Mental Health Charity PoetsIN Delivery of a portfolio of creative and proven programmes, wellbeing workshops and mentoring to help support people with mental health issues living in North Hertfordshire.
Sum requested	£14,815
Total project cost	£14,815
Previous support	£1,000 Hitchin Committee grant in 2022
NHDC Policy met	Yes
Council objectives	People First and Brighter Future Together

PoetsIN are a creative mental health charity which provides mental health and wellbeing support services through a variety of creative mental health programmes.

The funding will enable PoetsIN to deliver a portfolio of creative and proven programmes, wellbeing workshops and mentoring supporting people with mental health issues living in North Hertfordshire. They will split the deliveries in an 80/20 ratio with 80% going towards programmes and mentoring to support young people and 20% to provide wellbeing workshops for older people, all with the aim to combat social isolation and to assist recovery from the impact from Covid on people's health and wellbeing.

Isolation, loneliness, reduced social skills, reduced confidence, anxiety and depression have led to so many people struggling. This affected people during long periods of lockdown and combatted by great anxiety when restrictions were lifted with people's confidence in socialising significantly impacted. The programmes and workshops they are proposing to deliver in North Herts will help people to re-address their situation, learn new coping skills, relieve depression and anxiety impacted by social isolation and other individual factors.

They will provide 15 x Wellbeing Workshops working with 120-150 older people, 810 people per workshop. The interactive workshop will be delivered in 90-minute sessions informing people about the skills to help improve their mental health and wellbeing, with sessions covering mindfulness; worry; stress and free-thought. It is fast engaging and works well with older people to alleviate the issues they are addressing and experiencing.

For young people they will be able to provide 13 x Creative Mental Health, 6-week programmes, working with 8-10 young people through each course. The duration of each weekly session is 90 minutes. In total they will be able to provide support to between 104–130 young people. Additionally, they will provide 150 hours of Buddy support one-to-one mentoring for those young people with additional support needs plus older people struggling with feelings

of isolation. All are aimed at reducing symptoms of mental illness, improving wellbeing and equipping people with the tools to maintaining good mental health for life.

PoetsIN will be able to help between 224 – 280 North Herts Residents directly, with a potential 150 extra via the Buddy Service. The Creative Mental Health Programmes for young people will be delivered both in schools in North Herts or remotely through their on-line provision. This will be between September/October 2022 and the end of March 2023 in term times initially, but where needed outside of term time (easily delivered online). It would afford them up to 4 terms or a total of around 30 calendar weeks to deliver the 13 x 6-week programmes. Although 6 weeks long, they can be delivered twice a week, but even at once a week, they would only need to run just over 3 a week for the duration of the timeframes (with 1 extra for 6 of those weeks).

Wellbeing Workshops for older people will be delivered in the community utilising community centres, and other appropriate accessible locations ensuring people can get to the venue easily. They would look at concentrating some of them around Christmas, when loneliness is at its peak for many older people.

Their courses and workshops are tremendous value for money. Working in groups reduces the per head cost dramatically, rather than providing one-to-one support, and enables them to work with many more people than, for instance, individual counselling. The Creative Mental Health 6-week programme works out to between £88-£110 per person and the Wellbeing Workshops for older people at just £20-£25 per person. The 150 hours of mentoring will cost £1,875 which is £12.50 per session. They will be supporting young and older people in North Herts who have been affected by the pandemic and are suffering with mental health issues and social isolation impacted by Covid.

The last 12 months have been the busiest in their history, deteriorating mental health across the country has seen an increasing number of referrals. Many of these people fall below the NHS thresholds to receive help and are turned away, which causes great distress and anxiety. Sadly, this can literally be the difference between life and death.

Demand for their service is growing with a huge spike in young people. A year ago, all their referrals were from third parties, and now they are getting an increasing number of self-referrals every single day. Each one could need lots of help and there are no funds attached to self-referrals. Under 18s and young people are struggling, with 200 suicides a year in those that have yet to leave school. Just a few tools, a safe space and signposting to further support can be the difference between feeling like they have nowhere to turn to, to feeling supported and being heard.

Their support programmes have the benefit of having short lead times to accessing the support people so desperately need, providing early intervention to prevent mental health issues escalating. They offer little or no waiting time to receive support and can react quickly. The well documented increase in depression and anxiety caused by Covid-19 has created even greater demand for easily accessible and affordable support. They are now experiencing an epidemic of poor mental health which is expected to continue for years after the pandemic – something the NHS is stretched to provide.

If PoetsIN are successful in getting the funding they will be able to commence triage and programme booking within two weeks from referral with programmes – and with schools the Pastoral, SENDCO or Safeguarding lead will put forward the children they feel would benefit most. They will work with appropriate local organisations, they are members of several North Herts committees, and schools to promote the availability of the support available in North Herts, promote on their website and carry their specific marketing in the geographical area to ensure people who need support know it is available. They have many referring organisations throughout the area and have built good relationships with the schools. They also have an allocation of \$10,000 per month to use up on targeted PPC campaigns. They are in the third year of contributing content in Wellbeing Packs for Small Acts of Kindness (Beds and Herts) focussing on wellbeing for older people. They also work with referrals from Age UK.

Members voted to recommend that PoetsIn receive the full amount as requested in their application of £14,815 and an additional £207 making the total funding provided £15,022:

Result: Unanimous vote in favour of

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Chapter 1, s1-8 of the Localism Act 2011 provides a General Power of Competence which gives local authorities the powers to do anything if it is not specifically prohibited in legislation.
- 7.2 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.
- 7.3 The decision taker signing the Decision Notice has delegated authority to take such a decision in accordance with the North Hertfordshire District Council Constitution under section 14.6.8(b)(iii)(A) in relation to Community engagement and development, including financial assistance and grants to external organisations.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Community Facility Capital Grants

The amount available to recommend for allocation at this meeting equated to **£62,800**.

- 8.1.1 The total amount of grant funding requested for the consideration of the Panel members equates to **£14,098** if the decision is made to agree this amount - this will leave **£48,702** unallocated in the Community Facility Capital Grant budget.

8.2 Health Protection Board grants

The amount available to recommend for allocation at this meeting equated to **£50,000**.

- 8.2.1 The total amount of funding recommended by the Panel to allocate is **£50,000**.

9. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 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.

10. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 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.
- 10.2 Grant 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.

11. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

11.1 The Social Value Act and “go local” requirements do not apply to this report.

12. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

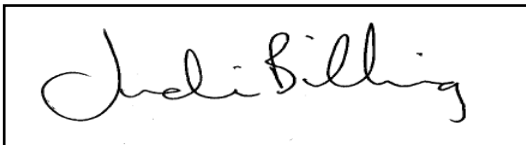
12.1. There are no known Environmental impacts or requirements that apply to this report.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

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

NOTIFICATION DATE

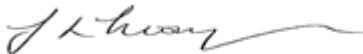
2 September 2022



Signature of Executive Member Decision taker

Date 1/9/22

Signature of Service Director: Legal and Community



Please Note: that *unless urgency provisions apply* EXECUTIVE decisions cannot be implemented until 5 clear working days have elapsed after the decision has been taken to allow for scrutiny call-in.

Call-in does not apply to NON-EXECUTIVE DECISIONS