

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 19 NOVEMBER 2013

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HEALTH, HOUSING AND
COMMUNITY SUPPORT

UPDATE ON COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAMME

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

Purpose/Summary of Report

- This is a review of grant allocations for the period 1 April 2013 to 30 September 2013.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:

That:

(A)	the progress being made to allocate grants according to agreed policies and areas of interest for grant support (as in Essential Reference Paper “B”) be noted; and
(B)	following the presentation from the Hertfordshire Community Foundation (HCF) the implications of closer Member involvement with the East Herts Fund for the Future be explored to ensure the legacy continues to operate for the greater benefit of residents in East Herts.

1.0 Background

1.1 Following a resolution by the Executive in 2012, it was agreed that Community Scrutiny would receive twice-yearly reports on community grant allocations. The purpose of the discretionary community grants programme is to help take forward the Council’s aims in people, place and prosperity. This is typically for non-statutory issues such as health and well being, improved parks/outdoor spaces and increased economic/social activities.

1.2 Grant giving also supports many ambitions in the East Herts

Together Sustainable Community Strategy (2009-2024) as well as objectives in the new East Herts Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2013-2018).

- 1.3 Grants are provided so that the Council can actively improve opportunities for communities and bring about positive change at the local level. This approach contributes to the new “Here to Help” philosophy of the Council as well as facilitating its role as a community leader.
- 1.4 The first report was received on 20 November 2012. This is the third report and focuses on grants allocated between 1 April 2013 and 30 September 2013.
- 1.5 Members are asked to note that the total community capital budget for 2013/14 is £140,900. This included slippage of £50,900 from the previous financial year and providing £90,000 for allocation in this financial year.
- 1.6 The total revenue budget for 2013 was £58,390, including a small unspent amount from the Councillor Engagement pot that was carried forward from 2012/13.

2.0 Report

- 2.1 During the first half of the financial year (1 April 2013 to 30 September 2013), 79 capital and revenue grants were awarded, totalling £101,923, as shown in the table below.

Theme	No. of requests	No. of grants awarded	Budget allocated
Summer Activities Fund 2013	20	20	£25,000
Small Community Grants – 1 st round	20	17	£6,694
Small Community Grants – 2 nd round	22	19	£7,890
Performance to Excellence	11	11	£2,450
Community Capital 1 st round - rural	14	12	£59,889
Total	87	79	£101,923

- 2.2 A payment of £1,390 is also committed to the Herts and

Middlesex Wildlife charity to commission their management work of King's Mead Nature Reserve in Ware. This brings the total allocation to £103,313.

2.3 All applicants for a grant are required to obtain an endorsement for their project from their Ward Councillor acting in their 'community leadership' role. This provides an opportunity for Members to engage with volunteers who are delivering health and social care, leisure, recreational and other services to residents in their ward. Members are asked to be sure that they only endorse projects that are for local residents.

2.4 Additionally, sports clubs that apply for a grant are expected to be affiliated with Active East Herts, the District's community sports network. In the future, registered charities will also be expected to affiliate with a relevant advice and infrastructure body such as the Councils for Voluntary Service Broxbourne and East Herts (CVSBEH) or the Community Development Agency of Hertfordshire.

2.5 The next section of the report addresses each area of funding in more detail.

2.6 **Summer Activities Fund 2013**

2.7 This year, the Council grant-aided 20 projects ranging from outdoor games and sports, holiday clubs, gardening for children and young people with learning difficulties, drama and podcasting to den building, educational events, fun days and trips out. The popular Play Ranger project was expanded into Sawbridgeworth and Bishop's Stortford. For a full list of projects go to www.eastherts.gov.uk/grants

2.8 Of the 20 projects funded, four specifically catered for children with disabilities. There were three applications from first-time applicants. Activities took place throughout the district (with some activities delivered in more than one area), broken down as follows:

Ware	4
Hertford	7
Buntingford	1
Sawbridgeworth	1
Bishop's Stortford	5
Villages	7

2.9 The bulk of the applications came from Hertford, Bishop's Stortford and the rural areas. Measures will be put in place next year to increase applications from other areas as one of the priorities of the programme is to maintain a geographic balance of provision. This priority necessitates the funding of high volume general play provision alongside smaller, village-based activities.

2.10 This scheme provides fun and exciting activities for children and young people over the summer holidays, complements youth diversion activities run by the East Herts Community Safety Partnership and takes forward priorities of "Every Child Matters." More than 2,886 different children and young people took part in the various activities over the summer. This is slightly down from last year due to fewer providers applying to run high volume activities.

2.11 A breakdown of the type of organisations funded is shown below:

Organisations working with disabled and vulnerable people	4
Youth organisations	6
Sports Clubs	3
Holiday Clubs	4
Churches	1
Museum	1
Environmental trust	1
Total	20

2.12 Feedback from recipients was analysed with the administrator of CVSBEH and it was identified that for recipients of a larger grant the fund enhances provision (match funding of 50% required). For those 11 groups receiving a grant of £1,000 or less, the Council's grant aid ensures the proposed event can go ahead – thus broadening the cultural offer available for children and young people during their break. Of the 20 projects, 17 met their agreed attendance figures. For those that didn't, the reasons given were: a perceived lack of promotion from schools and clash with family holidays.

2.13 The programme is popular with applicants because it has a user friendly application and a short turn around between submission and a decision being made. One of the weaknesses is that it is not reaching a wide base of applicants despite information being sent to 195 members of the CVSBEH and to an e-bulletin list of

1,000 contacts.

- 2.14 One of the unique projects supported by the fund is organised by East Herts Neighbourhood Watch, which used its £300 grant to pay for a trip to Herts Young Mariner Base, especially for those young people that supported the King George Community Action Day – taking forward Every Child Matters priorities of “making a positive contribution” and “supporting voluntary community activity.”

2.15 Small Community “Activities” Grants

- 2.16 In the first half of the year, 36 grants were awarded or conditionally awarded, totalling £14,584 and representing 50% of the £29,290 budget. Of these, 16 were to groups serving vulnerable adults or children. A list of grants is available on www.eastherts.gov.uk/grants and includes such groups as a newly formed Parkinsons’ Support Group in Bishop’s Stortford, a Community First Responder Unit in Ware, Home Start East Herts and a Volunteering Project at Stanstead Meadows.

- 2.17 Grant-funded activities took place throughout the district (with some being delivered in more than one area), broken down as follows:

Ware	3
Hertford	5
Buntingford	4
Sawbridgeworth	2
Bishop’s Stortford	13
Villages	11

- 2.18 The majority of requests for funding were received from Bishop’s Stortford and the villages. Measures are in place to encourage applications from other parts of the District.

- 2.19 A breakdown of recipients is shown below:

Grassroots groups, societies, clubs	13
Housing Association and Sheltered Housing Residents Associations	3
Town or Police partnerships/Chamber of Commerce	3
Sports Club	2
Registered Charities	10

Youth organisations	2
Independent pre-school charities	2
Parish Council	1
Total	36

- 2.20 This pot also supports Members to meet their responsibility of community engagement. Members can apply to hold events that engage with their constituents and discuss specific topics of interest. Councillor Haysey and Councillor Carver both received support for events – a public meeting in Bayford to discuss a planning application and rural police forum in Much Hadham. Councillor Symond’s request in 2012 for a grant to support a newly formed residents’ association was paid in this time period.
- 2.21 Eligible costs include: premises hire, training, insurance costs, publicity, small items of equipment. Groups interested in organising Christmas Parties for senior citizens, frail elderly and other vulnerable people would be expected to apply to this general fund and for the first time an application is required. The third funding round closed on 13 November 2013.
- 2.22 While only a light touch assessment is required, Officers must consider whether basic criteria are being met. During the first two funding rounds, six applications were considered ineligible since the event had already happened before a decision was made or there was a healthy financial surplus.
- 2.23 As there is no eligibility criterion relating to income, successful applicants ranged from having £80 in their current account to £154,000 with the overwhelming majority having £5,000 or less. Applicants with higher turnovers confirmed that the majority of their funds were in restricted budgets. Groups that have little capacity to generate income or raise funds have priority. Officers consider the financial need of the applicant and whether Council support would have significant impact.
- 2.24 **Performance to Excellence (PEX) Grants**
- 2.25 Eleven applicants were funded from April 2013 to the end of September 2013 and £2,500 (61% of budget) allocated to six talented young athletes and five talented dancers. Members have been made aware of awards made to young people in their wards.

- 2.26 The type of sports funded included: canoeing, basketball, badminton among others. The pot can help with such costs as travel expenses to national competitions and coaching fees that are essential to improving performance to national standard.
- 2.27 The terms and conditions of the PEX are now in line with other grant pots. Awards are made conditionally and require the applicants' agreement that they will provide information and details of "great moments in their sporting career" so the Council can demonstrate the benefits of this excellent scheme.
- 2.28 Community Capital 1st round (Rural Priority – Large and Small)**
- 2.29 The majority of the Community Grants Budget is capital funding and is used to provide the right tools for volunteers to get involved with projects that improve community amenities such as green spaces or community buildings – enhancing social cohesion and ownership and pride in the area.
- 2.30 In the first half of 2013, 12 grants were allocated to projects in rural East Herts, totalling £59,889 (67% of the original budget). Of these 12, four helped improve access to parks and enhanced play opportunities.
- 2.31 A full list of awards is available on www.eastherts.gov.uk/grants and includes Benington Recreational Charity Trust and Meesdon Village Hall Committee. Upon receipt of their grant offer to help improve the sports pavilion, Hormead Parish Council replied saying "*this will be a tremendous turn-round in expectations and a real boost to improve the facility for the community.*"
- 2.32 The Council's policy regarding capital grants is to give some precedence to areas that have received little or no New Homes Bonus money. As all five towns and some of the larger villages have been passed significant funds through the building of new houses, the Council's policy is to first fund projects in the rural areas. Projects in the towns may be considered later in the year if the budget is unspent.
- 2.33 For projects estimating to cost more than £2,000, the Council awards up to 50% of total project costs, up to a maximum £9,000. This requires grant recipients to raise the shortfall. It is anticipated that Council grants to date will lever an additional £179,933 into the District from other fund raising or external

grants.

2.34 A breakdown of successful recipients is shown below:

Parish Councils	3
Voluntary-led fundraising groups	2
Churches	1
Village Hall Management Committees	2
Registered charities/Environmental Trusts	4
Total	12

2.35 In terms of assessment, two applications were turned down in the first funding round as they were for projects based in the towns. Both were referred to the Small Community “Activities” pot and also advised that applications for town-based projects are eligible in the 2nd funding round, deadline 16 December 2013. Officers considered that the applications received in this round to be of high quality and well researched and evidenced.

2.36 **Monitoring and Feedback**

2.37 Since 2010, successful applicants have been required to submit a monitoring form detailing the outcomes of a capital grants project. The following is a selection of written feedback received. This type of information is regularly included in Members’ Information Bulletin.

“The project was to recover the existing floor which was crumbling and in time would have meant closing the hall on safety grounds. We can now proceed with our plans to form a table tennis club to which we hope to attract young people in the village. We will also be able to expand the large local following in ballroom dancing.” **Thundridge Village Hall Management Committee – Awarded £2,765 from 13/14 Community Capital Scheme**

“The overall project has created a more effective and informative visitor experience at Rye Meads nature reserve, enabling visitors to gain greater first-hand experience of the wildlife on their doorstep at Rye Meads, as well as help to protect and enhance biodiversity in the local area. The East Herts Council funding is therefore helping us to provide visitors with enhancement views of common terns, and to be creative with the rafts and experiment, which we hope will ultimately help this colony. If successful, we will be leading the way in good practice and will be able to give advice across the Lee Valley (and UK).” **RSPB awarded £798 from the 11/12 Community Planning Scheme**

*“Provision of lockers has meant that people who use the pool on their own (including many elderly people) can be confident that their possessions will be secure when they are swimming. The lockers have improved the perception and reality of security arrangements and are a deterrent to theft. The provision of lockers has made the Lido a more attractive facility for people to use. This has added to the overall upgrade of the changing room facilities at the Lido which have been achieved over the last two years by the volunteer group Friends of Ware Lido (FOWL) who have improved the cleaning and decoration of the changing rooms and helped raise funds for items such as a new hairdryer installation. **The Priory Charity – Awarded £1,000 from the 11/12 Community Planning Scheme***

*“The grant was used to cover the cost in full of purchasing 10 light-weight folding tables for the village hall, replacing the existing limited stock of heavy and difficult to handle tables. At previous community events in the village, funds have always been required to cover the cost of hiring and transporting tables from an outside source and this is finally no longer going to be a requirement or an on-going drain on the village hall’s limited financial resources. As a specific example, the new tables have arrived in time to provide valuable resource for the first ever Meesden Autumn Festival, due to <http://meesdenautumnfestival.wordpress.com> **Meesden Village Hall Committee – Awarded £872.49 from 13/14 Community Capital Scheme***

3.1 **Local Giving.com**

3.2 As reported previously, the Council has commissioned a not-for-profit fundraising website Local Giving.com to provide 30 free subscriptions to voluntary and community groups in East Herts.

3.3 To date, six East Herts groups are now fundraising online, including Hertford Town Youth Football Club, Ware Toy Library and and Hockerill Scouts. Others are in the process of registering. Please go to www.localgiving.com to view listings and donate.

3.4 The purpose of this new initiative is to encourage voluntary and community groups to explore other ways to raise money, awareness and support online, thus helping to reduce their dependence on grants. Due to Local Giving.com's unique set up, even unregistered community groups can benefit from Gift Aid top ups of 25% on eligible donations.

4.0 **External/other sources of Funding**

4.1 In response to a decision made by Members at the 25 June 2013 Community Scrutiny meeting, Officers have invited Jonathan Aves, Foundation Director of the HCF to talk about “dormant”

and/or external funds and how these could be made available for the wider community of East Herts residents.

- 4.2 An example of a “dormant” fund is the East Herts Fund for the Future, an endowment fund currently run and managed by Councillor Janet Mayes and the HCF. The aim of this independent fund is to build a growing, lasting source of support for charities and voluntary groups doing valuable work in the community of East Herts and to meet the most pressing needs of the District.
- 4.3 However, this is only possible if funds are raised during the year – building up the capital funds. Currently, there is limited activity in this area. A Steering Group comprised of Officers, Councillor Mayes and HCF has discussed the way forward. One option is to take an approach modelled on that used by the well-established Hertfordshire High Sheriff’s Award, where each new Sheriff is invited to take ownership, fund raise during their term in office and leave the fund in a better financial position year on year.
- 4.4 Members are asked to consider whether they would like Officers to further explore the wider implications of closer Member involvement in this fund – ensuring this legacy continues to operate for the greater benefit of residents in East Herts.

5.0 Marketing/Publicity

- 5.1 In the past six months, uptake from the media in regards to local grants has been positive, and has seen an increase from previous years. In the period covered by this report, eleven press releases were sent out with ten of them being picked up and used in the relevant papers, giving a publication rate of 91% percent.
- 5.2 Availability of community grants is promoted through the Council’s website, social media services, LINK magazine and stakeholder partners such as the CVSBEH, Active East Herts Community Sports Network, Hertfordshire County Council and HCF.
- 5.3 Announcements are also sent via email to Parish Council Chairmen and Parish Clerks and groups on the Engagement and Partnerships’ database. East Herts Members are notified of grant deadlines and allocations through the Members’ Information Bulletin.

5.4 The Grants Officer spoke about the availability of grants at the recent East Herts Rural Conference held on 13 September 2013, and represented the Council at the CVSBEH's Creating Change event.

6.0 Implications/Consultations

6.1 Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within **Essential Reference Paper 'A'**.

Background Papers

None.

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