

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]

SERVICE DIRECTORATE: ENTERPRISE

- The approval of grants in total **£21,573.42** from the 2023/4 Allocation of the Shared Prosperity Fund from the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to fund projects to improve the North Herts Town Centres:
 - **£12,432** internally to North Herts Council as outlined in 5.1.
 - **£6,000** to Hitchin Business Improvement District (BID) as outlined in 5.2.
 - **£3,141.42** to Royston Town Council as outlined in 5.3.
- **2. DECISION TAKER**
 - The Executive Member for Enterprise in consultation with the Service Director – Enterprise.
- **DATE DECISION TAKEN:**
30th November 2023

3. REASON FOR DECISION

- 3.1 In July 2022, North Herts Council (NHC) compiled the North Herts Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) Investment Plan, which provides details of our plans to distribute the 3 annual allocations of the fund provided by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to projects and programmes for the betterment of the District under the scheme.
- 3.2 In the investment plan, NHC allocated funding towards Improvements to town centres and high street (investment priority E1) as follows:
- | | |
|--------|----------|
| 2022/3 | £76,702 |
| 2023/4 | £51,404 |
| 2024/5 | £229,438 |
- 3.3 The Investment Plan was approved by DLUHC in Dec 22/Jan23 and NHC received the 2022/3 allocation in Feb 2023. NHC received the 2023/4 allocation in July 2023.
- 3.4 Following the first round of town improvement grants, NHC have identified a balance from 2022/3 and 2023/4 of £25,877 which must be spent prior to the end of March 2024. Stakeholders were asked to submit further proposals to spend the money.
- 3.5 The Stakeholders have submitted their proposals, and NHC have prioritised urgent requirements to be included in the 2023/4 Town Centre tranche. These are outlined in Section 5 below for approval.
- 3.6 Following approval, NHC will pay the grants to the stakeholders who will be responsible for delivery of and reporting on the approved projects.
- 3.6.1 These activities are all designed to fall under the 'E1 intervention, Improvements' to the town centres and high streets.

3.6.2 Required outcomes

The outputs and outcomes chosen to reflect the success of the measures by March 2025 are :

- a) Increased Footfall (at least 5%)
- b) Improved public realm space (in m2)

We will require feedback from the grant recipients, coupled with our use of the Community Vision Town Centre metrics system to report back to DLUHC.

- 3.6.3 We will require the grant recipients to procure items in accordance with the SPF guidance, furnish NHC with invoices representing all spend and to return any underspend that may occur.

4. CONSULTATION WITH MEMBERS

- 4.1 Consultation will take place by means of an information note that published in the Members Information Service on the 1st December 2023.

5. APPLICATION DETAILS

- 5.1 NHC is required to monitor to progress of improvements in town centres under the SPF Programme. In order to provide consistent metrics we would like to extend our contract with HUQ for provision of the Community Vision system which provides data on footfall, dwell time, demographics and other data. The 2023 annual cost was £11,840, paid from the 2022/3 allocation. It is proposed to renew the contract at the end of December 2023 at a cost of **£12,432**, a 5% increase. This will give NHC access to the next generation Signal system produced by HUQ which will give us greater accuracy in metrics and allow our partners and stakeholders their own direct access to the system, at an additional cost of 15%.

We have also contracted centrally with People and Places Partnership who compiled the recent Town Centre studies to enable further work with stakeholders to crystallise and enable them to start to implement their Town Centre Improvement programmes in Letchworth, Baldock and Royston. The total cost is up to £24,000 over the 18 months to October 2024. The Letchworth Heritage Foundation have pledged a further £2,000 to match the work undertaken in the town.

It appears that People and Places are likely to invoice NHC for £8,000 in 2023/4 and so we propose to roll the balance of £16,000 over to the 2024/5 budget.

- 5.2 Hitchin BID have requested **£6,000** towards the £12,050 cost of renewing lighting suspension and connection system. The remainder of the balance will be provided by BID, the Hitchin Area forum and member's locality budget.
- 5.3 Royston Town Council have completed the original Street furniture renewal and repair project. They have found that some items were not included in the original quotation, and so have requested a further grant for the completion of the project. This amounts to **£3, 141.42**.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 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.

- 6.2 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.
- 6.3 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.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The current balance available in the Shared Prosperity budget and North Herts District Investment Plan to allocate towards Town Centre Improvements is **£411,245** over years 2022/3, 2023/4 and 2024/5 from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.
- 7.2 The Allocations as outlined in section 6 represent a capital spend of 28%, well in excess of the 13% total allocation minimum required by DLUHC.

8. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 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.

9. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 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.
- 9.2 Area committee funding is awarded to community groups that clearly demonstrate positive impact on the community and wider environment. The projects outlined in this report seek to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

10. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The Social Value Act and "go local" requirements do not apply to this report.

11. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

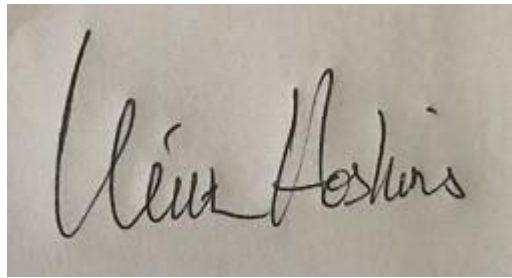
- 11.1. There are no known Environmental impacts or requirements that apply to this report.

12. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

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

NOTIFICATION DATE

30th November 2023



Signature of Executive Member Decision taker

Date30/11/2023.....



Signature of Service Director: Enterprise

Date ...30/11/2023

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