# **RECORD OF DECISION MADE UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY**

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| **PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT** |
| Any interest to declare/ or conflict and any dispensation granted for the Officer or Executive Member[NO] |

**SERVICE DIRECTORATE:** LEGAL & COMMUNITY

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| 1. **DECISION TAKEN**

The approval of £40,000 from the Community Renewal Fund from the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) via Stevenage Borough Council to target those who are economically inactive to provide skills and support to help them into paid or voluntary work or training: 1. **£10,000** to Citizens Advice North Herts as outlined in 9.1
2. **£10,000** to North Herts CVS as outlined in 9.2
3. **£20,000** to Create Community as outlined in 9.3

**2. DECISION TAKER**Jeanette Thompson Service Director: Legal and Community1. **DATE DECISION TAKEN:**

28 April 2022 |

1. **REASON FOR DECISION**

To use the MHCLG funding.

1. **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

Not to use the funding in the way described. This was not considered to be an effective option.

1. **CONSULTATION WITH MEMBERS**

Consultation has taken place with relevant Executive Member(s).

1. **FORWARD PLAN**

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

1. **BACKGROUND/ RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS**

8.1 Since September 2018, partners have been working collaboratively through the Hertfordshire Growth Board – an alliance consisting of the Leaders of all the Local Authorities and the Chair of the LEP. Together, the Partners are responding to the place leadership and growth challenges that face Hertfordshire now and, in the future, and are committed to ensuring that the Partners work in a proactive, positive and inclusive way.

8.2 In May 2021, the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) published the £200m Community Renewal Fund, inviting applications from authorities across the UK, with several areas being identified as priority areas for funding. Hertfordshire was not identified as a priority area. Despite this the Partners agreed to submit a joint bid, and a broad project approach was agreed, consistent with the Growth Board objectives. Stevenage Borough Council agreed to undertake the role of lead and accountable body and took responsibility for writing and submitting the bid.

8.3 Bid outcomes were expected in July 2021, with projects due to start in August. However, announcements were delayed, and it was in November 2021 that Stevenage heard that its bid had been successful; the project was awarded £715,672.

8.4 £500k is available to be split equally between the ten districts (£50k each) to use to deliver Activity 3, and the required outcomes in Annex 1. Districts can develop proposals that best suit their geographical make-up, and these must include distributing grants that support the development of VCSE organisations and micro businesses as part of proposals.

8.5 Stevenage Borough Council were particularly interested in supporting partnership projects that show a cooperative approach. It is our intention to work with one collaboration and between 2 to 4 single micro business / VCSE organisations

6.6 The core objectives and aims of the Community wealth building fund

8.6.1 Activity 3: To establish schemes that (i) run innovative projects to support people to improve their life skills, training, and job prospects; and (ii) support VCSE organisations and micro-businesses to become more enterprising, e.g., develop their ability to win grants and contracts, consider their sustainability and develop decarbonisation plans. Support may include small grants to enable them to begin to deliver on their plans.

8.6.2 **Activities funded**

 Creating and providing more accessible training and job opportunities for people who are unemployed and economically inactive.

8.6.2 **Required outcomes**

Each District will help at least 3 VCSE organisations and 2 micro business (micro businesses include social enterprises, CIC’s, Co-Operatives etc).

Of those organisations receiving support, each will help at least 10 individuals; 7 who are unemployed, and 3 who are economically inactive. This can include volunteers.

Unemployed people will be without a job, actively seeking work in the last four weeks and available to start work in two weeks. If they are claiming benefits, these will be Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) or intensive work search under Universal Credit.

Economically inactive people will be not in work and not seeking work. If they are claiming benefits, these will include Employment Support Allowance and Incapacity Benefit, along with specific conditionality under Universal Credit.

8.7 Working in collaboration with the Economic Development and Community Engagement VCSE partners were identified and encouraged to work in partnership to provide a wraparound project whereby each partner provides separate elements that enable those who are economically inactive back into voluntary work, employment, or training.

8.8 Discussions have taken place with these partners and they have come up with customer journey whereby they all work together and depending on the needs of the individual they can refer between themselves to provide the best action plan for the individual’s needs.

1. **APPLICATION DETAILS**

9.1 **North Herts Citizens Advice (NHCA)**

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| **Project** | To work in partnership with Create Community and North Herts CVS to support unemployed and economically inactive people to enter further training or into employment |
| **Sum requested:**  | **£10,000** |
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| **Council objectives** | People firstA brighter future together   |

They are currently designing the project and aim to start delivering towards the end of April. The project will end on 31st July.

By working together, they can offer each client a personalised programme to help break down the barriers to employment they may be experiencing. This programme will include short courses, digital skills training, mentoring, access to volunteering opportunities and advice to address any practical problems affecting their lives.

The Client can self-refer to the project via any of the three services or be proactively referred by the partners. In addition, referrals will come from the Job Centre. The project will be publicised via social media and posters in our premises. The first stage for clients will be a triage/needs assessment which can be carried out by any of the three partners. Project work will be carried out at CANH and Create premises in Letchworth, and at CANH premises in Royston.

CANH will provide the practical advice element of the programme. We will advise on any issue but are anticipating most demand will be for money advice. The advice offered will be tailored for each client according to the complexity of the issue(s) and the client’s capability. The adviser assigned to this project will be at generalist level, but clients will have access to CANH’s specialist services if necessary.

Research carried out by Citizens Advice in 2020 (National Outcomes and Impact Research) showed that 4 out of 10 people found it easier to find or hold down a job after receiving advice from a local Citizens Advice office. 97% of clients said that practical problems made other areas of their life more difficult. All clients surveyed said their problems caused anxiety and/or financial difficulty. Solving practical problems has been shown to increase people’s ability to cope better with day-to-day life, increase mental well-being, and set people on a more positive pathway towards training or employment.

The £10,000 for CANH will be spent on 2 days a week of paid staff time to deliver assessment and advice to project clients, plus some management hours for project development and outcome reporting. This has been costed on a full cost recovery basis so the project will cover its share of organisational overheads. CANH will collect all necessary demographic and outcome data.

Additionally, they intend to use housing and sheltered scheme managers who all work in the community to identify genuine cases of hardship where they can enhance lives this winter and provide this financial help to prevent fuel poverty. Rather than give cash they intend to order appliances etc through shops that they currently use and purchase vouchers for high street shops to give to residents to purchase warm clothing and other eligible items.

Each case would have a financial assessment and a referral for authorisation. They will ask for match funding from the resident where possible for expensive items such as appliances/carpet, or fully fund if unaffordable.

9.2 **North Hertfordshire Centre for Voluntary Services (NHCVS)**

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| **Project** | North Herts CVS will work in partnership with Citizens Advice North Hertfordshire (CANH) and Create Community to support unemployed and economically inactive people to enter further training or into employment.  |
| **Sum requested:**  | **£10,000** |
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| **Council objectives** | People firstA brighter future together   |
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They are currently collaboratively designing the project and aim to start delivering towards the end of April. The project will end on 31st July.

By working together, they can offer each client a personalised programme to help break down the barriers to employment they may be experiencing. This programme will include short courses, digital skills training, mentoring, access to volunteering opportunities and advice to address any practical problems affecting their lives.

Clients can self-refer to the project via any of the three services or be proactively referred by the partners. In addition, referrals will come from the Job Centre. The project will be publicised via social media and posters in distributed locally. The first stage for clients will be a triage/needs assessment which can be carried out by any of the three partners. Project work will be carried out at CANH and Create premises in Letchworth, and at CANH premises in Royston.

North Herts and Stevenage CVS will provide the practical support and training for clients with the use of IT and provide relevant equipment (such as a tablet or laptop) when required. They will also provide a tailored brokerage service for clients who would like to explore a voluntary role and match them to a role where they can gain relevant experience and skills.

The £10,000 for North Herts CVS will be spent on 10 hours a week of paid staff time to deliver support and advice to project clients, plus some management hours for project development and outcome reporting. NHCVS will also use some of the funding to provide IT equipment where required if there are not sufficient devices available through their Staying Connected project. This has been costed on a full cost recovery basis so the project will cover its share of organisational overheads. They have agreed to collect all necessary demographic and outcome data.

9.4 **Create Community**

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| **Project** | Create Community will work in partnership with Citizens Advice North Hertfordshire (CANH) and North Herts CVS to support unemployed and economically inactive people to enter further training or into employment. |
| **Sum requested:**  | **£20,000** |
| **NHDC Policy met** | Yes |
| **Council objectives** | People firstA brighter future together   |

Create Community are currently designing the project and aim to start delivering towards the end of April. The project will end on 31st July.

By working with the two other partners, they can offer each client a personalised programme to help break down the barriers to employment they may be experiencing.

This programme will include short courses, digital skills training, mentoring, access to volunteering opportunities and advice to address any practical problems affecting their lives.

Client can self-refer to the project via any of the three services or be proactively referred by the partners. In addition, referrals will come from the Job Centre. The project will be publicised via social media and posters in their premises. The first stage for clients will be a triage/needs assessment which can be carried out by any of the three partners. Project work will be carried out at CANH and Create premises in Letchworth, and at CANH premises in Royston.

 Create’s primary role will be to provide a safe and nurturing space (from their Hub for 2 mornings per week), where they’ll have staff and volunteers available to offer nourishment (mental and physical), advice, guidance and signposting.

This will include:

• space, time and support

• the opportunity to offload, pause, and explore options for next steps

• CV support and job searching

• signposting for further in-house or external provision

• access to experienced and volunteer support

• access to the laptops/internet

There is added value in this initiative which comes from:

• the location in the heart of the community in the town centre, close to the Job Centre Plus (JCP), close to railway and bus networks

• Their existing provision of courses and activities

• the support of volunteers who can sustain the initiative both in terms of administrative/operational help but also insight from their own experience and learning

The £20,000 for Create Community will be spent upon:

• contribution to overheads and space/room rental

• staff provision to clients … assessment, advice and signposting

• project/staff/volunteer management

• project development

• outcome collation and reporting

• outreach/project promotion

• expenses and refreshments

• equipment (if required)

Create will also take on the central collation and reporting requirements.

**10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 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.

10.2 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.

10.3 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 provide “financial assistance and grants to external organisations, and voluntary sector and community groups (including although not limited to capital or revenue grants).

**11. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

11.1The current balance available in the budget to allocate is £55,000*(including £5,000 admin costs)*funding provided from the Community Renewal Fund from the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) via Stevenage Borough Council to target those who are economically inactive to provide skills and support to help them into paid or voluntary work or training

11.2 From the £50,000, £10,000 has been provided as a contribution to the Pan Hertfordshire Community Wealth programme, for projects that provide environmental sustainability and supporting apprenticeships. This leaves £40,000 to be utilised within the North Hertfordshire District.

11.3 The total amount of funding requested adds up to **£40,000.** Distributed £20,000 to Create Community as outlined in 5.4 and £10,000 each to NHCVS and CANH as outlined in 5.2 and 5.3.

**12. RISK IMPLICATIONS**

12.1 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.

**13. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

13.1 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.

13.2 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.

**14. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS**

14.1The Social Value Act and “go local” requirements do not apply to this decision as it is not a procurement or contract.

**15.** **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

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

**16. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

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

## NOTIFICATION DATE

29 April 2022

**Signature of Executive Member consulted**

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**Date 28.4.22………………………………….**

**Signature of Service Director: Legal and Community**

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**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. This is a non-executive decision**