

TITLE OF REPORT: CHAMPION NEWS & FINANCE REPORT

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF POLICY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise the Committee of the activities and schemes with which the Community Development Officer has been involved.
- 1.2 To bring to the Committee's attention some important community based activities that will be taking place during the next few months.
- 1.3 To bring to the Committee's attention details of recent requests received for Area Committee Development Discretionary Grant Funding made by community groups and local organisations.
- 1.4 To advise the Committee on the current expenditure and balances of the Area Committee delegated budgets.

2. FORWARD PLAN

- 2.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key decision and has not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

3. PROJECT/ACTIVITY/SCHEME DETAILS

3.1 Baldock Town Partnership

Since the July Area Committee, the Baldock Town & District Partnership (BTADP) has held three events which were Baldock Day (Sat 9th July), the August Farmers Market (Sat 13th August) and the Balstock Family Fun Day (Sat 11th September)

Baldock Day.

Baldock Day which marks the anniversary of the completion of the Baldock enhancement works proved extremely successful again in 2011. The event combined a Farmers Market consisting of 24 stalls as well as numerous inflatables and rides for both children and teenagers alike. There was also a classic car show and several bands also performed on the day.

This event had a real benefit to the whole town. First, businesses on the High Street and White Horse Street all had increased footfall during the day. Secondly the event gave a number of local groups and organisations including Sandon School, Merry Go Round Under 5's group and the Scouts an opportunity to fundraise.

August Farmers Market

At the time of writing this report the event had not taken place. The Baldock CDO will provide a verbal update on this at the September Area Committee meeting.

Balstock Family Fun Day

There is a separate section within this report detailing the work of the Baldock CDO in the planning stages for Balstock – as the event takes place after the preparation of this formal report, a verbal update will be provided at September's Area Committee meeting.

Markets

Since the July Area Committee Report, there has been positive progress in terms of bringing new market holders to Baldock. Members will recall that the Wednesday market had been struggling since the turn of the year with the number of stalls dropping from 11 to 6.

Since July, there has been an increase in stall numbers and there are now 9 regular stall holders trading at the Baldock Wednesday Market. New stalls include Caribbean cuisine, Indian cuisine and a clothing stall.

Whilst this is positive news, the Baldock TCM is still concerned about the future of the market and will continue to look for more stalls and regularly publicise the market in the local papers.

Membership Scheme & BNG

Since the July Area Committee Report, the BTADP has signed up a further two businesses to the Membership Scheme. There are now 36 businesses signed up to the scheme, securing approximately £1000 a month for the BTADP.

Since July, there has also been an increase in membership to the Baldock Network Group (BNG), with a further 3 members signing on in the last month. There are now 15 full members of the BNG. Money generated from the annual memberships and the bi-weekly breakfast meetings will secure at least £2,000 funding for the partnership each year.

Events

Future events planned by the BTADP include:

- Farmers Market (Saturday 8th October 2011)
- Baldock Christmas Event (Friday 2nd to Sunday 4th December 2011)

3.2 Baldock Youth Council

The Baldock Youth Council (BYC) stopped meeting at the end of July but will reconvene again after the summer holidays in September 2011. Youth Connexions who run the Youth Council will be trying to recruit new members to the BYC during the summer months by encouraging young people who are attending events on the Summer programme to join.

3.3 **B’Fest – Be UR SELF 2011**

The B’Fest event was held on Saturday 16th July at Knights Templar Sports Centre. Whilst the event ran smoothly with no issues or problems on the day, attendance was drastically hampered by poor weather - the non stop rain throughout the day resulted in approximately only 50 young people attending, compared with the 400+ who attended in 2010.

While the turn out was disappointing the rain did not impact on the operating schedule for the day, with all attending still able to enjoy the full range of activities that were planned including inflatables, a mini football tournament and the full line up bands.

3.4 **Reinstatement of Cellar doors**

Reinstatement work at both the GoldCrest and George and Dragon Public House are now complete. Work was completed and signed off during the first week of August 2011.

3.5 **Nightingale Park – Community Safety project**

Work on the Nightingale Park project was completed during the first week of August 2011. Sportsmark the chosen contractors for the works marked out the basketball court, as well as a streetscene that will be utilised for pedestrian safety training. In addition a Snakes and Ladders game and Hopscotch grid were also marked out on the site.

This project was developed as a diversionary measure to combat anti-social behaviour in the park. It is envisaged that the basketball court will be used by the Stevenage NBA who will run basketball coaching sessions at the park for local children and teenagers.

In terms of the streetscene, the Baldock CDO will be liaising with the Baldock Day Nurseries and Infant schools during September 2011 to make them aware of the facility and its potential usage for basic pedestrian safety. There may also be scope for the facility to be used for cycle training.

Prior to the works being carried out, concerns had been raised by Baldock & District Members regarding the safety of young people using the facility due to cars entering the site. To combat this, ‘children at play’ warning signs have been erected at the entrance to the park.

3.6 **Signage in Ashwell**

The Baldock CDO has been working with Herts Highways, County Councillor Tony Hunter and the Ashwell Retail Group to introduce new road signage for Ashwell.

The aim of the project is to raise awareness of the village and its numerous facilities and to encourage more visitors to the area by improving the signage to Ashwell.

As detailed in the July Area Committee report, the Baldock CDO has met with Herts Highways and the Ashwell Retail Group regarding the possibility of new signage for Ashwell. Unfortunately at the time of writing this report, Hertfordshire Highways had declined the signage request of the Ashwell Retail Group.

Herts Highways' decision is based on their opinion that Ashwell is already adequately signposted and that usage of brown signs for Ashwell does not conform to the Department of Transport (DfT) or HCC policies.

The Baldock CDO is still pursuing this matter with the support of the Arbury Ward Member.

3.7 **Baldock Half Marathon**

The Baldock CDO continues to work with the Baldock TCM and Chris Coghlan from Endurorunning.com to bring a half marathon event to Baldock. It is hoped that the event could be up and running for 2012, possibly taking place during late February or early March. The final date is still to be confirmed but will be carefully selected not to clash with other running events locally.

Since the July Area Committee meeting the Baldock CDO has met with Chris Coghlan and has identified a route for the half marathon. The route will start at Hartsfield School and will take in the villages of Wallington, Rushdon, Sandon and Redhill.

The Baldock CDO has liaised with Hartsfield School who are happy for the building to be used as the start and finish point for the Baldock Half Marathon.

It was originally hoped that the race could start and finish in the High Street so as to bring people into the town, however this has not been possible due to safety issues.

The Baldock CDO has briefed the Police on the route which will not be subject to any road closures. During the coming months the Baldock CDO will be briefing the North Herts Safety Advisory Group (SAG) on the event and once the necessary approvals have been sought the Baldock Town & District Partnership will then seek a race permit from the relevant Athletic bodies.

3.8 **Balstock Family Fun Day**

The Baldock CDO has been working closely with the Balstock Music Festival Committee (BMFC) on the Balstock Family Fun Day.

Balstock is a three day musical event which showcases local bands within the numerous Public Houses in Baldock. In 2010, the BMFC held a community event in Baldock High Street that was aimed at families. The event included a live concert in the High Street. This was a first for Baldock following the completion of the enhancement works.

The 2010 event was well organised and passed without incident but was poorly attended. The Baldock CDO has therefore worked closely with the BMFC over the last 6 months to ensure that the event is more successful this year.

As last year, there will be live bands performing throughout the day. The music however will be more tailored to a family audience. This will mean more acoustic and family friendly music in the afternoon and early evening before rock music is introduced for the last couple of hours.

This year the whole High Street will be utilised, bringing an event similar to Baldock Day into the town. Attractions on the day will include:

- Farmers Market
- Inflatable fun for children and teenagers including a gladiator joust, an inflatable boxing ring and a bouncy castle.
- Free face painting
- Assault Course operated by soldiers from Basingbourn Barracks.
- Food on the day will be catered for via a barbeque run by the local Scouts and a local food vendor who will be providing Caribbean food.

The Baldock CDO has assisted the BMFC with the production of the Event Plan and assisted with publicising the event across the villages that feed into Baldock as their local town. The Baldock CDO will also be in attendance on the day to ensure the event runs smoothly and without incident.

Pepper Court and other households in close proximity to the concert will receive an advance notice flyer about the event and will be invited to attend the Engine Public House on the day of the event to receive a free drink or burger.

This event will be covered by the Baldock Town Centre Manager's Premises Licence.

3.9 **Baldock Fair 2011**

The Baldock Fair will be returning to Baldock in October. The Fair will be operating from Sunday 2nd to Tuesday 4th October 2011, pulling into Baldock at midnight on Saturday 1st October and will leave Baldock by 6am on Wednesday 5th October 2011. As in previous years Baldock CDO will be in attendance to oversee the Fair arriving and leaving the town.

The Baldock CDO has organised the Road Closure arrangements with Herts Highways and also the Waste Management arrangements both during and after the fair leaves the town, on Wednesday 5th October.

A Public Notice detailing the proposals for the Fair will be posted in the Comet newspaper in August and September.

The Baldock CDO and the Baldock TCM will be notifying businesses and households during September about the upcoming Baldock Fair via leaflet & letter drops.

Flyers and notices will also be displayed in the Baldock car parks and on vehicles on the weeks building up to the Fair.

The Baldock CDO will be meeting with Cy and Charles Abbott from Abbotts Amusements early in September to finalise plans for the Baldock Fair.

3.10 **Highways Work Programme**

The Highways Work Programme detailing works either carried out or planned within the Baldock & District in the current financial year, are detailed in Appendix 2.

3.11 **Additional schemes proposed to JMP from Baldock & District Committee**

At the June Area Committee, members were invited to nominate additional schemes for inclusion in the North Hertfordshire Highways Partnership – Joint Member Panel scheme of works for 2011/12. Members identified a number of schemes and these were considered by JMP at its July meeting. The JMP response to the Committee Proposed Schemes are detailed in Appendix 3 of this report.

4. FUNDING DECISIONS TO BE MADE / CONSIDERED

4.1 The Committee is asked to note the budgetary expenditure, balances and carry forwards from the Development Budgets and the Visioning Budgets Sheets which are attached to this report as Appendix 1.

4.2 **Future of the Baldock Memoranda of Understanding**

There are currently 7 Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) within Baldock & District. The 7 MOU's for the area are:-

- Baldock Town Twinning
- Ashwell Museum
- Baldock Festival
- Baldock Retirement Sewing Club
- Baldock Rotary Club
- Baldock Seniors Club
- Baldock Town Partnership.

Details of funding currently provided, as well as indicative funding for future years is included in Appendix 5.

As part of the Council's efficiencies & saving plans, all MOU's grant entitlements reduced by 7.1% for the 2011/12 financial year, with 7.1% off the overall grant total each year for the subsequent three years.

Members will be aware that the MOU were three year understandings between the Authority and the seven organisations which are due to end in March 2012.

Members are asked to consider future commitments under the MOU process and note that any further award of MOU's would remain subject to a 7.1% annual reduction each year of the 3 year term of the understandings; members may wish to explore and discuss options to reduce or remove some grants in favour of others, provided the overall 7.1% saving from each area committee can then be achieved.

4.3 **Balstock Family Fun Day**

A Fast Track Grant of £500 has been awarded from all Members of the Baldock & District Committee (in the usual split) to help with the publicity costs for the Balstock Family Fun Day.

4.4 **North Herts Village of the Year 2012**

Arbury Ward and Weston & Sandon Ward Members' are asked to consider financially supporting the North Herts Village of the Year Category in next

year's competition co-ordinated by the CPRE which will form part of the overall Hertfordshire Village of the year competition.

As in previous years, both rural Ward Members are being asked to consider a commitment of £50 from each of their respective Ward Member Development Budgets.

Approval for a further £50 contribution is being sort from the Ermine Ward Member within the Royston & District Area Committee and Members on the Southern Rural Area Committee will be asked to consider an overall commitment of £350, thus making a total grant to the CPRE of £500 for running and coordinating the 2012 competition programme.

Members will recall that financial support in the development and continuation of an Annual North Herts Village of the Year Category within the wider Competition, directly derived from an action within an earlier version of the Council's own Rural Strategy.

4.5 **Current Funding Applications**

The Baldock CDO is awaiting the completed funding application paperwork for a number of projects. These were not received in time for this report but will be processed before the Baldock & District Committee meeting scheduled for September. The projects are detailed in the table below.

Ward	Project
Arbury Ward	Funding support for Ashwell Academicals to enable them to purchase new goals for the football club. Funding to come from the Arbury Ward Members preallocated Rural Community Projects pot.
Baldock Town / Baldock East	Funding support for Baldock Bowls Club to enable them to purchase equipment.
Baldock East	Funding support for Hartsfield School PTA to enable them to create a memorial garden at the school
Weston & Sandon	Funding support for Weston Voluntary Nursery School to enable them to purchase a new sofa for the venue.

5. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The Terms of Reference in relation to Area Committees confirm that they may establish and maintain relationships with outside bodies/voluntary organisations which includes discretionary grant aid/financial support. However, this does not include grants for district wide activities.
- 5.2 Section 2 Local Government Act 2000 provides that the Council has power to do anything which it considers likely to promote or improve the economic, social or environmental well-being of its area. This would apply on the basis that financial assistance to voluntary and community organisations improves the economic, social or environmental well-being of the District or part of it.
- 5.3 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.

- 5.4 The Committee has delegated powers to administer funds from the budgets described.

6. FINANCIAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Members are asked to note the information detailed in Appendix 1 of the report, which relates to the Area Committee budget balances for the current financial year 2011/12.
- 6.2 The spreadsheet also details the pre-allocations carried forward from the previous financial year 2010/11 to the current financial year 2011/12.

7. HUMAN RESOURCE AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The local MoUs are managed by the Community Development Officer as part of the regular work programme.
- 7.2 The great majority of the voluntary and community projects that are funded by the Council have equality and social inclusion as a key objective of their purpose. Such projects work very closely with and for the more disadvantaged and potentially socially excluded within our communities.
- 7.3 All activities undertaken by the Council, its committees, Community Development officers or agencies working on its behalf are to be conducted in accordance with the NHDC Corporate Equality Strategy and relevant Equalities legislation.

8. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS

- 8.1 Consultation with Members has occurred in connection with the allocation of funds for Community Projects.
- 8.2 Consultation with the respective officers and external agencies / groups has taken place with regard to the funding proposals for Area Committee Discretionary Development Funds.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 The Committee is asked to comment on the JMP responses to the Highway Schemes proposed by the Baldock & District Committee.
- 9.2 The Committee is asked to note the budgetary expenditure, balances and carry forwards from the Development Budgets.
- 9.3 That the Committee and the respective Rural Ward Members consider a financial commitment of £50 from each of their Ward Development Budgets in support of the 2012 North Herts Village of the Year Competition.

- 9.4 The Committee is asked to note comments regarding the Memoranda of Understanding as detailed in point 4.2 above, discuss and to advise accordingly.

10. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 10.1 To ensure that the Committee are kept informed of the work of the Community Development Officer.
- 10.2 This report is intended simply to inform Members of the financial resources available to the Committee. It draws attention to the current budgetary situation, assists in the effective financial management of the Area Committee's budget and ensures actions are performed within the Authority's Financial Regulations and the guidance in the Grants procedure.
- 10.3 The awarding of financial assistance to voluntary organisations and the use of discretionary spending allows the Committee to further the aims and Strategic Priorities of the Council.
- 10.4 The allocation of funds will improve the services provided by local organisations and groups that are available and accessed by members of the community.

11. APPENDICES

- 11.1 Appendix 1 - Area Committee Development Budget Spreadsheet.
- 11.2 Appendix 2 - Hertfordshire Highways Work Programme 2011/12
- 11.3 Appendix 3 – JMP's response to the Baldock & District Committee's proposed Highway Schemes.
- 11.4 Appendix 4 - Area Committee Work Programme 2011/12
- 11.5 Appendix 5 – Indicative MoU Spreadsheet

12. CONTACT OFFICERS

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13. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 13.1 Community Governance Reviews – Full Council Meeting 25th February 2010.