

TITLE OF REPORT: COMMUNITY UPDATE AND GRANT APPLICATIONS**REPORT OF THE HEAD OF POLICY & COMMUNITY SERVICES****1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1 To advise the Committee of the activities and schemes with which the Community 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 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. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to note the budgetary expenditure, balances and carry forwards within the Area Committee Development Budget spread sheet attached as Appendix 1.
- 2.2 The Committee considers a grant award from the Arbury Ward Budget to the Radwell Village Hall to assist with external improvements to the building as outlined in 8.2.1 and Appendix 2 of this report.
- 2.3 The Committee considers a grant award from the Sandon & Weston Ward Budget of £1,000 to the Rushden & Wallington Parish Council to assist with the installation of 2 emergency defibrillators within the community as outlined in 8.2.2 and Appendix 3 of this report.
- 2.4 The Committee considers a grant award to the Baldock Arts & Heritage Centre to assist with the purchasing of essential equipment as outlined in 8.2.3 and Appendix 4 of this report.
- 2.5 The Committee considers a grant award to help achieve the finance required to renew the Baldock Community Mini Bus to maintain a vital local service for the town and surrounding area as outlined in 8.2.4 and Appendix 5 of this report.
- 2.6 The Committee considers a grant award to the Baldock Allotment & Leisure Gardeners Association to assist with access road and drainage improvements at the North Road site as outlined in 8.2.5 and Appendix 6 of this report.

- 2.7 The Committee considers a grant award to the Friends of St Mary's Church to assist with the production and printing of a History booklet about St Mary's and a children's Discovery Trail Booklet as outlined in 8.2.6 and Appendix 7 of this report.
- 2.8 The Committee considers a grant award from the Arbury Ward Budget to the Friends of Caldecote Church in the region of £300 to assist with annual operating costs as outlined in 8.2.7 and Appendix 8 of this report.
- 2.9 The Committee considers a grant award from the Weston & Sandon Village to Rushden Village Hall to assist with future internal enhancements to the building as outlined in 8.2.8 and Appendix 9 of this report.
- 2.10 The Committee considers a grant award from the Arbury Ward Budget in the region of £450 to Ashwell Playgroup to assist in purchasing early years equipment as outlined in 8.2.9 and Appendix 10 of this report.
- 2.11 The Committee considers a grant award from the Arbury Ward Budget in the region of £80 to Ashwell Museum to assist with costs relating to the Well Dressing Event as outlined in 8.2.10 and Appendix 11 of this report.
- 2.12 The Committee considers a grant award from the Weston & Sandon Ward Budget to Sandon Village Hall to assist with thermal insulation improvements to the building as outlined in 8.2.11 and Appendix 12 of this report.
- 2.13 The Committee considers a grant award to 2nd Baldock Scouts Group to assist in purchasing a new equipment trailer as outlined in 8.2.12 and Appendix 13 of this report.
- 2.14 The Committee considers a grant award from the Arbury Ward Budget in the region of £150 to Caldecote & Newnham Parish Council to assist in the purchase of a new village notice board as outlined in 8.2.13 and Appendix 14 of this report.
- 2.15 The Committee considers a grant award from the Arbury Ward Budget to Ashwell Cricket Club to assist in purchasing a new mower as outlined in 8.2.14 and Appendix 15 of this report.
- 2.16 That the Committee endorses the actions taken by the Community Officer to promote greater community capacity and well-being for the Baldock & District Area.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To ensure the Committee is kept informed of the work of the Community Officer.
- 3.2 This report is intended 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, budget strategy and the guidance of the Grants policy.
- 3.3 The awarding of financial assistance to voluntary organisations and the use of discretionary spending allows the Committee to further the aims and Priorities of the Council but should at all times accord with the agreed policy of the Council..

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 There are no alternative options being proposed other than those detailed within the text of this report. However in the course of debate at committee, Members may wish to comment and offer additional views on any of the items raised within this report.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

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

6. FORWARD PLAN

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

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1 Members are asked to note the information detailed in Appendix 1 Area Committee Budget Spreadsheet, which relates to the Area Committee budget balances for the 2015/16 financial year.
- 7.2 The spreadsheet also details pre-allocated sums carried forward from the previous financial year 2014/15 including balances and past expenditure relating to the allocated and un-allocated budgets available to the Committee.
- 7.3 The current level of funding available within the Area Committee's 2015/16 Area Grant Budget is:-

Baldock Town £9,200

Baldock East £3,500

Arbury £3,300

Weston & Sandon £2,600

- 7.4 The current level of funding available within the Area Committee's 2014/15 Area Grant Budget is:-

Baldock Town £2,278

Baldock East £480

Arbury £798

Weston & Sandon £3,024

A full area breakdown is given within the Area Committee's Budget Spreadsheet Appendix 1.

8. ISSUES

8.1 This report has been produced to keep Members informed of the work of the Community Officer covering for the Baldock & District area.

8.2 Grant funding

8.2.1 Radwell Village Hall – Guttering and External Repairs

Radwell Village Hall Trustees are seeking financial assistance from the Arbury Ward Budget to assist in undertaking essential repairs to the Hall's external guttering in order to resolve water ingress problems.

The Trustees over recent years have undertaken a programme of improvements, including through the use of PACIF funding, in order to enhance the Hall in general and the internal conditions for those using the building.

Currently, the Hall has a serious problem with rainwater drainage from the roof, and the Trustees have been advised that the solution is to replace the gutters and the boarding to which they are attached.

The best quote they have sourced to address the work is £2,500. The majority of the Hall's income comes via the provision of Village Hall Teas, which are made and served by volunteers each summer. They receive a small amount of revenue through letting the Hall but these, with the income from the Teas sold over the summer months just about cover the Hall's running expenses.

8.2.2 Rushden & Wallington Parish Council – Village Defibrillators

The Parish Council has received the offer of two Heart Defibrillator units supplied by the Ambulance Trust, to be located in each of the Village's telephone boxes secured in powered and heated units.

The cost of installation for each unit is £650 and the Parish Council is seeking a contribution of £500 for each location from the Weston & Sandon Ward Budget.

Whilst the Parish Council as a precepting authority should be exempt from receiving NHDC funding under our budget policy, in this instance the Parish Council represent the only formally constituted body to be responsible for the equipment and thus officers recommend an exception; such equipment can be a lifesaver in the event of cardiac arrest and especially the time which may pass waiting for an ambulance to attend.

8.2.3 Baldock Arts & Heritage Centre – Internal Equipment

The Centre promotes all aspects of Arts and Heritage for the benefit of the population of Baldock and its' surrounding villages. These include drama productions both professional and amateur, operating an art gallery for the benefit of local artists, providing facilities for other groups such as a local choir, art classes, and writers circle, along with events related to the local museum and providing a community focus in respect of the public spaces being for hire for one off events.

The Centre's Management Committee is seeking financial support in the region of £1,600 re provision of the following items:-

- For a gallery viewer (basically a large paper rack) to enable art works that have not been displayed on the gallery walls to be accessed with 15 inserts for holding the artwork - £329.85;
- Three external advertising banners to advertise their range of facilities and upcoming events - £360;
- LED lighting for the gallery to provide better illumination, with the ability to highlight individual works of art as required - £460;
- A Stage Monitor for use by amateur drama and similar groups - £120;
- Projector and screen. For use at a wide variety of talks and lectures that are held in the Centre, along with use for certain art installations - £500.

Total £ 1769.85

Baldock Arts and Heritage Centre, by being a volunteer run organisation, is able to offer the local community cost-effective events and occasions.

By way of update, the Baldock Arts and Heritage Centre has recently drawn down sufficient funding from NHDC to replace the Centre's boiler, but there is still a significant sum of money remaining as part of the transfer arrangement which needs to be spent within timescales contained in the original lease document. Officers are in discussion with the Centre's management team to ensure that this happens.

8.2.4 Baldock Community Mini Bus

The current "Friends of Baldock Senior Citizens Minibus Group" has provided a community minibus service for the residents of Baldock for over 20 years. The current vehicle is becoming old, unreliable and not fit for purpose, which has prompted the group to review the provision of the service.

The present mini bus is a 05 plate making it about 11 years old, hence one of the reasons for replacing it. It is costing a significant amount of money to maintain, in the region of £5,000 - £8,000 over the last year.

As a group, they also have an involvement with the Baldock Community Centre and therefore understand from the various user groups how the lack of local affordable transport impacts many of the events held at the centre. Over the years the local community minibus has filled this gap and the group hope to continue this service in future years.

Current regular users include the local branch of Age Concern, the lunch club, disabled club, British Legion, WI and others. Plus additional use by other groups and sports clubs within the town. Possible funding routes/contributions should they be pursued from these and any other user groups, in order to achieve the necessary funds required to replace the bus.

There is a proven need for such a service and on a number of occasions when the bus has been unavailable due to breakdown or repair, local events have had to be postponed and in some cases cancelled.

During the period January–September 2015, the service directly assisted approximately 140 local residents per month and ultimately helped them to live a more fulfilled and active life.

The current bus is run entirely by volunteers through a management committee. For regular “bookings” the group provides a volunteer driver from a pool of signed-up local helpers. For occasional usage, the hiring group supplies their own driver, providing that the qualifying criteria are matched.

The management group is currently working with representatives from a number of existing user groups as to the type / configuration of a replacement vehicle to ensure that all users’ requirements are matched in the best possible way.

The need to continue the provision of a community transport solution in Baldock is key to the town's overall cohesion. The group hosted an open meeting at the Baldock Community Centre last year to discuss the scheme’s future. As a result there was an overwhelming desire of the town to see the scheme develop and flourish, thus providing the catalyst to reform the Minibus Committee and start planning for the future.

The Baldock Rotary club is considering a possible grant of £5,000 if indeed it could be matched via other sources. The group has approximately £16,000 set aside in reserves and Herts County Cllr Muir is considering a grant from his HCC Ward Locality Budget in the region of £4,000.

If the Committee were minded to match the Rotary’s £5,000 with an ‘in principle’ Area Grant Award to the same level, this would give the Minibus Committee approximately £30,000 in its replacement fund to build on, with the view of finding around a further £3,000 - £5,000 in order to purchase a replacement bus at the end of the year.

8.2.5 Baldock Allotment & Leisure Gardeners Association – Drainage Improvements

The local management group is seeking funding support to assist in alleviating a surface water problem at the North Road site.

Following the installation of a tarmac surface to the allotment car park, there have been numerous cases of ponding and water run-off, rendering one plot unusable. The surfacing has also slightly reduced the area available for turning and has led to increased user driving speeds, which is clearly an increased risk to pedestrians and walkers wishing to gain access to Ivel Springs.

A plan has been devised which involves two soakaways, leaky piping, kerb installation with managed run-offs and installation of two speed bumps. A grant of £650 previously awarded for fencing has not been drawn down as the two projects need to be addressed simultaneously.

The total costs of the works are estimated at £3,600 and the management group is asking the Area Committee to consider a grant award in the region of £3,000.

8.2.6 Friends of St Mary’s Church – Promotional Publications

Friends of St Mary’s Church are seeking funding to assist with the production of new publicity materials promoting the church’s rich history.

The Friends group have two publications in mind:-

- An illustrated Church History booklet - 2,000 copies, estimated cost £3,000;
- Children’s Discovery Trail Booklet - 750 copies, estimated cost £300;
- The Friends of St Mary’s Church group is seeking a grant award in the region of £1,700.

8.2.7 **Friends of Caldecote Church – Operational support funding**

The Friends of Caldecote Church group is seeking operational funding support in the region of £300 from the Arbury Ward Budget to assist with their yearly running costs such as: mailout & postage charges, stationery, website fees, cleaning materials, grass cutting the external areas and generally advertising all the events.

Over the years the group has dramatically increased local awareness of the historical significance of the building across the local area and further afield. As a result their major events are attended by around 600 people each time.

The group had 10 committed supporters locally in 2007 and now at the end of last year they can boast supporting numbers of around 187.

Ongoing major repair works to the building costing over £75,000 have been carried out in the last five years, with a considerable percentage of those funds being raised by the group.

8.2.8 **Rushden Village Hall Committee – Enhancements to Kitchen & Toilet Facilities**

The Hall's management committee are proposing to improve and extend the current kitchen facilities, which will also necessitate some reordering of the toilet accommodation.

The Hall's management committee is seeking a grant award/commitment from the Weston & Sandon Ward Budget to assist with the overall estimated costs.

At the time of collating this report further details were to follow, although Members of the Committee might be minded to consider an 'in principle' commitment for the time being, with a more comprehensive report tabled at the Committee's meeting scheduled in June.

Members need to be aware that the Rushden Village Hall Management Committee was approached by Council officers administering the Rural Capital Funding Scheme in late 2014 offering funding towards works identified in their last condition survey, but they failed to make any response and thus the money was allocated elsewhere.

8.2.9 **Ashwell Playgroup – Early Years Equipment**

Ashwell Playgroup is a not for profit registered charity which has been running for 40 years and managed by a parent committee. The Committee strives to keep the playgroup affordable to all and raises in excess of £6,000 annually to subsidise the overall running costs.

The Playgroup now faces rising running costs and this year the Committee expects both rental and legislative salary increases which will need to be covered. Having also reviewed their early years equipment and toy resources, it is clear that a number of items need to be updated or replaced.

The Playgroup is therefore seeking a grant award from the Arbury Ward Budget in the region of £500 to assist with the purchasing of new early years items, such as a wooden castle, an indoor Den Frame and a wooden brick set etc.

8.2.10 **Ashwell Village Museum – Well Dressing Event**

Members of the Ashwell Museum group wish to undertake another Well Dressing as part of Ashwell at Home 2016.

It is understood that Well Dressing started in Tissington, Derbyshire after the plague as a thanksgiving for the purity of the water which, it was believed, saved many of the inhabitants from death.

The group is seeking a grant award in the region of £80 from the Arbury Ward Budget to help purchase clay, flowers, seeds, wool and other natural materials required to complete this year's design.

8.2.11 Sandon Village Hall – Insulation Works

The Hall's management committee is seeking a financial contribution from the Weston & Sandon Ward Budget in the region of £1,680 to assist with thermal insulation improvement works to the western end of the building.

The western end of the Hall (the Part Time Post Office, Upper Room and Storage Room) is of solid wall construction and has always suffered from condensation and damp conditions.

The total estimated cost for the works is £3,360 and the Hall's committee has committed £1,680 (50%) of its reserves to the scheme.

8.2.12 2nd Baldock Scout Group – Equipment Trailer

The Scout Group is seeking support for the purchase of a new equipment trailer. The group's current trailer needs to be replaced as it is beyond economical repair.

As well as using the trailer for taking equipment to activity camps and expeditions, it is also used to raise critical funds for the group by transporting tents which are hired out for use at local events.

They are a small group, relying on volunteers to run their meetings and to raise the vital funds in order to keep the group active. Currently the group has approximately 60 members made up of boys and girls of 6 to 15 years of age, coming from both Baldock Town and Baldock East areas.

8.2.13 Caldecote & Newnham PC – Noticeboard

The Parish Council is seeking a grant award in the region of £150 from the Arbury Ward Budget to help purchase a new village noticeboard.

The Community Officer has examined this application against the Authority's Area Grants Policy, the organisation's accounts and grant history, and considers it an eligible application.

8.2.14 Ashwell Cricket Club – New Mower

The Cricket Club is seeking funding support from an Arbury Ward Grant to assist in the purchasing of a new mower to maintain the Cricket Table and outer field on the Recreation Ground.

The club has identified a Dennis Ultra Razor 560, at a cost of £4,500 ex vat as a suitable model to replace the existing old machine. It is hoped that the new mower will help improve the playing surface at the Recreation Ground following deteriorating conditions in recent years.

Together with a growing interest in cricket in Ashwell, and an increase in the number of young players who had been developed in the Club's junior programme, the league team has enjoyed competitive success and recently been promoted to a higher league.

It is planned for the new mower to be securely stored in Parish Council premises and insured under its policy, with the Cricket Club being responsible for its management and routine maintenance.

8.3 Community update

8.3.1 Baldock Town Partnership

At the request of the Chairman of the Committee, representatives from the Baldock Town Partnership will now provide a verbal update at every Area Committee meeting. As a result such detail will no longer be covered within the Community Update report.

8.3.2 Ashwell Parish Rooms – funding awarded from S106 January 2016 for the full cost of window replacement approx. £13,500

8.3.3 Other Baldock initiatives the CO has been involved with:

The CO has investigated and provided a summary of the questions and responses from the Town Talk held at the last Committee meeting

- Town Centre, checked bent sign posts and damaged bins – alerted officers within the Waste and Parking teams;
- Sent details of possible funding streams to Nightingale Group re playgrounds;
- Baldock Town Talk notes completed and sent to Members for approval and then to all those attending;
- Signpost the Youth Council to the Baldock Arts & Heritage Centre Group;
- Completed paperwork re potentially unlocking UU / s106 planning contribution funding for the Community Mini Bus, Ashwell CC Mower & Ashwell Parish Rooms window replacement;
- Information passed on to a Baldock resident re helping parents understand maths and may use Arts & Heritage Centre as a venue;
- Meeting with Jo Meeks from Youth Enterprise to discuss actions, links with other groups in Baldock and funding possibilities;
- Meeting with Baldock Community Centre re planned works to the old youth wing;
- Corresponded re potential future funding requirements re Arts & Heritage Centre, St Mary's, Community Centre and others;
- Chairman and Vice-Chairman update meeting in Baldock;
- Meeting with Town Centre Managers and advice given re events and NHSAG.

8.4 Highways Matters

This section is included within the community update report for each committee cycle to facilitate debate and enable appropriate feedback on any of the proposed or listed Highways related schemes.

Any new proposals or revised schemes will be forwarded to the respective Herts County Councillor for consideration who will in turn report back and advise the Committee accordingly.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The Terms of Reference in relation to Area Committees confirm that they may establish and maintain relationships with outside bodies/voluntary organisations which include discretionary grant aid/financial support but excluding grants for district-wide activities. The Committee has delegated powers, as a body, to allocate discretionary budgets and devolved budgets within the terms determined by the Council.
- 9.2 Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 provides a General Power of Competence which gives local authorities the power to do anything that individuals generally may do. This may be for, or otherwise than for the benefit of the authority, its area or persons resident in its area.
- 9.3 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.
- 9.4 The Committee **as a body** has delegated powers to administer funds from the budgets described. Whilst individual ward members may comment on and support (or not) any grant application put before the committee, the decision to award is afforded only to the Southern Rural Area Committee itself under the Council's Constitution and provided such committee is quorate at the time of such decision.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 In the past few years there has been no inflationary allowance to the main Area Committee Budget and the 2015/16 baseline budget has stayed the same as the previous year.
- 10.2 Appendix 1 provides details of the 2015/16 budget position for the Area Committee.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 There are no relevant risk entries that have been recorded on Covalent, the Council's Performance & Risk system. Individual events should have their own risk assessments in place to mitigate any health and safety issues. There are no pertinent risk implications for the Authority associated with any items within this report.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 The Equality Act 2010 came into force on the 1st October 2010, a major piece of legislation. The Act also created a new Public Sector Equality Duty, which came into force on the 5th April 2011. There is a General duty, described in 12.2, that public bodies must meet, underpinned by more specific duties which are designed to help meet them.
- 12.2 In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of its 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.

- 12.3 The projects which comprise the Community Officers' workload, and area committee funding assigned to community projects are assessed to ensure that they are as inclusive as possible to members of the local community. The only deviation to this is where a minority group may specifically receive funding or allocation of resources to address a particular area of need or 'gap' in provision.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 As the recommendations made in this report do not constitute a public service contract, the measurement of 'social value' as required by the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 need not be applied, although equalities implications and opportunities are identified in the relevant section at paragraphs 12.

14. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

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

15. APPENDICES

- 15.1 Appendix 1 – Area Committee Development Budget Spreadsheet 2015/16.
- 15.2 Appendix 2 – Ward Grant Form – Radwell Village Hall
- 15.3 Appendix 3 – Ward Grant Form – Rushden & Wallington PC
- 15.4 Appendix 4 – Grant Form – Baldock Arts & Heritage Centre
- 15.5 Appendix 5 – Grant Form – Baldock Community Mini Bus
- 15.6 Appendix 6 – Grant Form – Baldock Allotment & Leisure Gardeners
- 15.7 Appendix 7 – Grant Form – Friends of St Mary's, Baldock
- 15.8 Appendix 8 – Ward Grant Form – Friends of Caldecote Church
- 15.9 Appendix 9 – Ward Grant Form – Rushden Village Hall
- 15.10 Appendix 10 – Ward Grant Form – Ashwell Playgroup
- 15.11 Appendix 11 – Ward Grant Form – Ashwell Museum
- 15.12 Appendix 12 – Ward Grant Form – Sandon Village Hall
- 15.13 Appendix 13 – Grant Form – 2nd Baldock Scouts
- 15.14 Appendix 14 – Ward Grant Form – Caldecote & Newnham PC
- 15.15 Appendix 15 – Ward Grant Form – Ashwell Cricket Club

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17. BACKGROUND PAPERS

17.1 Review of Policies and Procedures for Financial Assistance to Voluntary and Community Organisations, November 2002.