

**TITLE OF REPORT: COMMUNITY UPDATE AND GRANT APPLICATIONS**

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF POLICY &amp; 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 of £1,250 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 of £250 to the Stevenage Football Club Foundation to assist in the start up and development of Walking Football sessions at the Arena as outlined in 8.2.2 and appendix 3 of this report.
- 2.4 The Committee considers a grant award of £350 from the Arbury Ward Budget to Ashwell Village Museum as outlined in 8.2.3 and appendix 4 of this report.
- 2.5 The Committee considers a grant award of £1,500 to the Rotary club of Baldock for the continued provision of Festive Lights within the Town Centre as outlined in 8.2.4 and appendix 5 of this report.
- 2.6 The Committee considers a grant award of £500 to the Baldock Town Twinning Association as outlined in 8.2.5 and appendix 6 of this report.
- 2.7 The Committee considers a grant award of £1,000 to Balstock as outlined in 8.2.6 and appendix 7 of this report.

- 2.8 The Committee considers a grant award of £1,000 to the Baldock Senior Club as outlined in 8.2.7 and appendix 8 of this report.
- 2.9 The Committee considers a grant award of £550 from the Weston & Sandon Ward Budget to Weston Village Hall as outlined in 8.2.8 and appendix 9 of this report.
- 2.10 The Committee considers a grant award of £750 from the Weston & Sandon Ward Budget to Rushden Village Hall as outlined in 8.2.9 and appendix 10 of this report.
- 2.11 The Committee considers a grant award of £1,500 to Letchworth GC Rugby Football Club as outlined in 8.2.10 and appendix 11 of this report.
- 2.12 The Committee considers a grant award of £1,000 to Letchworth District Gardeners Association as outlined in 8.2.12 and appendix 13 of this report.
- 2.13 The Committee considers a grant award £1,500 to North Herts Citizens Advice as outlined in 8.2.12 and appendix 13 of this report.
- 2.14 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 objectives 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's budget for the 2016/17 financial year.

- 7.2 The spreadsheet also details pre-allocated sums carried forward from the previous financial year 2015/16 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 2016/17 Area Grant Budget is:-

**Baldock Town £4,200**

**Baldock East £1,600**

**Arbury £1,500**

**Weston & Sandon £1,200**

- 7.4 The current level of funding available within the Area Committee's 2015/16 Area Grant Budget is:-

**Baldock Town £2,556**

**Baldock East £1,200**

**Arbury £700**

**Weston & Sandon £1,895**

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 Officers covering for Baldock & District area.

### **8.2 Grant funding**

#### **8.2.1 Radwell Village Hall – Guttering & External Repairs – Arbury Ward**

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, some 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 this, together with the income from the Teas sold over the summer months, just about covers the Hall's running expenses.

### **8.2.2 Stevenage Football Club Foundation**

Stevenage FCF is a registered charity which organises activities & sports participation events which promote Health & Wellbeing, Youth Engagement, Lifelong Learning.

It has a membership in excess of 2000 with an age spectrum of 3 to 75 years of age.

The Foundation wishes to provide a weekly one hour Walking Football session for residents, both male and female, that are over the age of 50 living within Baldock and the surrounding area.

They plan to hold the sessions at the Arena in Baldock and if successful in gaining the funding required they would look to run a 20 week period over the summer months.

The total project cost is £1,100, made up of £600 venue hire, £100 advertising fees and £400 coach fees to coordinate the activity each week and the foundation is looking for a grant of £500 from the Area Committee

It is envisaged that after an initial free taster session, each participant will be asked to contribute £5 per session per week in order to generate funds that allow the activity to become self financing and sustainable for the future.

The Foundation has highlighted that as life expectancy continues to increase, the need for people to remain active for longer is become more prevalent. It is envisaged that the project will engage with some within the target demographic that are not currently active or would like to increase their activity levels on a weekly basis.

The project is aimed at those 50 years of age and in another area there has been a further split of participants, running sessions for 50-64 years of age group and also a 65+ group.

The sessions will allow those participants to increase their activity levels and also create a new social group within the local community. Both the physical and social benefits of taking part in such a session can contribute to the ongoing health and well being of those that are taking part.

The sessions will be accessible to all within the community who fall into the appropriate age groups and the Foundation feels that whilst a lot of physical activities and venues are created for younger people, they feel that these sessions will be delivered in a relaxed and welcoming environment, which in turn will hopefully encourage those who do not usually take part in physical activity to do so.

### 8.2.3 **Ashwell Village Museum – Arbury Ward**

Coordinators of Ashwell Village Museum, which is a registered charity, are seeking financial assistance from the Arbury Ward Budget in the region of £350 to assist with the Museum's annual running costs, estimated at around £5k pa.

The Museum has a membership of over 100 covering all ages, with approximately 1,500 formal visitors per year, plus other visits by members of the local community and schools groups.

The Museum provides a focus for community identity and heritage and the coordinators wish to maintain local services to the community whilst protecting the objects placed within their care for future generations.

This group was in receipt of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the 4 year period between 2011/12 to 2015/16. In essence the application for funding support mirrors the terms of the MoU.

### 8.2.4 **Rotary Club of Baldock**

The Rotary Club of Baldock is seeking financial assistance from the Area Committee in the region of £2,000 to assist with the continuation of the provision of Festive Lights within the town over the Christmas period each year.

Funds would help cover part of the estimated annual costs of £6,000 in the repair, refurbishment, replacement of various lighting panels and light strings, plus the purchase of new and updated displays to further widen the coverage provided across the town.

The festive lights and striking illuminations are erected on the vast majority of the business premises in the central area of the town and are eagerly anticipated and widely enjoyed by all sections of the community.

The Rotary Club of Baldock, as the providers and installers of the lights receive many compliments every year to this effect. It is worthy of note that even after 35 years of continuous provision and upgrade of the lights & power supply mechanisms, there is a common assumption that the Local Authority is the provider.

The remaining funds required will be achieved via club subscriptions, local fundraising initiatives and some contributions from local businesses.

This group was in receipt of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the 4 year period between 2011/12 to 2015/16. In essence the application for funding support mirrors the terms of the MoU.

### 8.2.5 **Baldock Town Twinning Association**

The objects of the Association are to afford members interested in international twinning an opportunity to meet together at social events in order to establish friendships and long lasting bonds with those from the international Twinned Towns of Baldock.

The Association is seeking funding support of £500 from the Area Committee to help cover the costs involved in hosting twinning visitors from Eisenberg this July. Total costs amount to £2,060 and cover coach & venue hire costs and catering & entertainment fees.

This group was in receipt of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the 4 year period between 2011/12 to 2015/16. In essence the application for funding support mirrors the terms of the MoU.

#### **8.2.6 Balstock**

Balstock Community Event will be returning for a sixth year between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> September 2016. The event is growing annually and is an important event for the pubs and other businesses within the town, which positively benefit from the increased footfall and customer, spend over the event weekend.

Balstock is a free music event held within 16 venues around the town with a main Community Event held in Baldock High Street combining live music and fun activities for all the family, including fun fair rides and inflatables and a number of food vendors.

The coordinators of the event are seeking funding in the region of £1,000 from the Area Committee to assist with preparation and up front costs associated with publicity running up to the event itself.

The organisers estimate the overall costs for staging this year's event to be approximately £8,800. Any surplus in funds made from contributions received from all the venues and other income, will as in previous years, be donated a chosen charity.

#### **8.2.7 Baldock Senior Club**

The Baldock Senior Club meets for two hours each week hiring facilities at the Community Centre at a cost of £45pw. Alternative premises have been tried in the past but have been found to be unsuitable by a number of club members.

The Community Centre is central in the town and is accessible to less mobile club members being on the ground with a level access, plus adequate toilet facilities. There is always a member of the Centre's Staff on duty to deal with any matters on the day etc. The Club is able to use the centre's photocopier to help with the administering its activities and general membership matters.

The Club has use of the Kitchen Facilities and some storage space for club equipment, all of which assists and enhances what the club has to offer. In addition, some Club members attend the Lunch Club which meets immediately prior to the Senior Cub each week.

The Club's income (£2,435 last year) is derived from annual subscriptions, weekly entrance fees, funds raised by raffles & tombolas, plus contributions made members towards the costs of some of the entertainers who are hired in.

Club members already contribute to overall Club funds and many also pay extra to use the Mini Bus for one of both journeys each week.

The Club itself has some funding in reserve which is used to supplement annual income. Previous year's reserves have been used to subsidise the Christmas Lunch for all members; the purchase of a hands free microphone used by speakers so that all can hear and subsidising weekly activity and entertainer fees.

This group was in receipt of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the 4 year period between 2011/12 to 2015/16. In essence the application for funding support mirrors the terms of the MoU.

### 8.2.8 **Weston Village Hall – Weston & Sandon Ward**

The Hall's Management Committee is seeking a grant award from the Weston & Sandon Ward Budget to replace and upgrade the existing lighting system within the main hall.

A recent user survey identified lighting as a main area of concern with subsequent independent advice also identified lighting (alongside heating and insulation levels) as an area where considerable improvements could be made in energy efficiency.

The management committee is looking to apply for an Awards for All grant for £10k with the use of £4k of its own reserves to address the insulation properties of the Hall. As a result the committee is seeking grant funding support of £1k from the Area Committee to assist with enhancements to the lighting system as a separate initiative.

The project entails the replacement of 50W halogen spot lighting and 80W fluorescent units, with LED units to improve energy efficiency of the hall. Quotations received for removal of the old units and supply & installation of the new fittings are in the region of £1,133.

### 8.2.9 **Rushden Village Hall – Weston & Sandon Ward**

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 still to follow, although Member's 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 September.

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.

### 8.2.10 **Letchworth GC Rugby Football Club**

Letchworth Garden City Rugby Football Club is a family friendly club providing the local community with the opportunity to play, watch and be involved with rugby (e.g. volunteer for coaching, administration, maintenance etc).

The club's junior playing section has around 250 members, with age groups ranging from under 7s to under 18s. There is an approximate 50/50 split between junior members living in Letchworth and those living in Baldock & surrounding area. All coaching provided for the children is voluntary, with each age group receiving coaching on Sunday mornings and many in mid-week too. The club hosts junior rugby festivals for district and county teams, with 600+ children taking part.

The senior section has around 90 playing members and regularly fields four sides each week. The 1st XV are one of the strongest sides in the Herts & Beds area and are one step away from National League status.

The club is very proud of the 'Letchworth Braveherts', a team that enables people with learning disabilities and/or autism to play and be part of the rugby family, and which is now a well established and recognised part of the club.

The club's facilities include a clubhouse with changing rooms, wash rooms, a kitchen and bar/social area, and four full size rugby pitches one of which has floodlighting. The club employs a full time Club Steward who is responsible for managing the bar, cleaning the clubhouse and maintenance/minor repairs. The club employs kitchen and bar staff during busy periods, e.g. 1st XV home games, junior rugby festivals etc.

The club is truly community based and welcomes many supporters on match days. Over the past year the club's charity balls have raised £2,000 for North Herts Hospice and Macmillan. The bar/social area of the clubhouse has recently been refurbished. Further improvements are now underway to make the club a more welcoming environment for families, visiting teams and supporters, including a refurbishment of the changing rooms, showers & kitchen and re-surfacing of the car park.

**Update on the club's initiatives presented at the last committee meeting:**

- The after school tag rugby clubs for primary schools have been very successful, following grants received for equipment from County Councillors Terry Hone and Michael Muir. So far 11 after school tag rugby clubs have been developed, with over 200 children taking part.
- The club has been working with the RFU to deliver coaching in secondary schools, and is very pleased that the RFU have offered their 3 year 'All Schools' program to Fearnhill and Highfield, which will start in September 2016. With the support of Jess Young, Active Communities Officer for NHDC, the club has also secured 'Satellite Club' funding to deliver coaching to Knights Templar for 3 years, also starting in September 2016.
- The Letchworth Area Committee previously advised that the club should apply for a Letchworth Civic Trust grant to help establish a rugby scholarship scheme. As a result the club received an award of £1,000 and the club is now working with local schools to offer scholarships to children from deprived backgrounds, with costs being met by the club.
- Two significant infrastructure improvements are underway in readiness for the 2016-17 season. The Clubhouse facilities are being upgraded (changing rooms, showers, washrooms etc), and the club is working in partnership with North Herts District Council & Letchworth Heritage Foundation to upgrade the car park.

After the feedback at both Letchworth & Baldock Area Committee Meetings the club has reflected on the type of support it possibly might seek from the Authority.

One of the club's current operational concerns is the significant mid-week training disruption caused by a lack of floodlit pitch space. The club has four pitches but only one is floodlit and all the various teams within the club (adult, junior U13s to U18s, mini U7s to U12s, girls, mixed-abilities) are competing for the same pitch space in mid-week.

The floodlit pitch is clearly being over used and of very poor quality and training is frequently cancelled to prevent further damage to the playing surface. During the winter months of the 2015-16 season, 36 junior training sessions were cancelled.

This situation is reflected in the 'North Hertfordshire Playing Pitch Strategy & Action Plan', from which the following is taken.



**Current status:** There are four poor quality pitches, one of which is floodlit and one of which is specifically used for training. The site is overplayed by 8.5 match equivalents.

**Recommended actions:** Investigate potential for further floodlights on a second pitch.”

The club would like to address this by acquiring mobile floodlights, each of which provides lighting for half a full-sized rugby pitch. The advantage of mobile floodlighting is that they don't necessarily need to use on one pitch alone and that they could be use in any combination that would make best use of the available playing surfaces on all pitches, whilst protecting particularly poor areas.

The club would also like to install a shipping container to protect & secure the floodlights.

**Mobile floodlights.** The two second hand mobile floodlights cost £11,890.

The club has been awarded a grant of £10,000 from Sport England towards this cost, and is requesting funding to make up the shortfall.

Requested funding: **£1,890**

(£1,260 from Letchworth, £630 from Baldock & District)

**Secured Storage.** A hard standing area for the shipping container will need to be created, at a cost of £1,500. A used shipping container in which to store the mobile floodlights will cost £1,845.

Requested funding: **£3,345**

(£2,230 from Letchworth, £1,115 from Baldock & District)

**Total requested funding: £5,235**

(£3,490 from Letchworth, £1,745 from Baldock & District)

#### 8.2.11 **Green Shoots**

Green Shoots is a joint project between North Herts College (NHC), Tapps Garden Centre and Letchworth District Gardeners Association (LDGA).

It has been set up to give local (North Herts Area) vulnerable students access and support to a safe working environment, where they will be able to create and cultivate a market garden with raised beds and a poly tunnel.

The produce grown will be sold at current market prices to Tapps Tea Rooms and Farm Shop and the money earned re-invested back into the project for seeds and other garden essentials. It is hoped that the project will provide locally grown fruit and vegetables for local people and hence reduce food miles.

It is envisaged that the project will be long term (months/years) with new students coming on board.

One of the critical elements the project is seeking assistance for is funding for a poly tunnel as this would allow the project to run throughout the year, extending the growing seasons and giving protection for winter crops and preparation for an early spring start.

Support is being given to the students from NHC. The use of the land and professional guidance is from Tapps Garden Centre and administrative support including banking facilities is from LDGA.

The project coordinators will also be applying to local companies for support for specific items. These will include a Tool & Potting shed, tools, boards for raised beds & compost etc.

The students will be of 'vulnerable needs' and this can include mental, physical and emotional issues so they need a safe, structured and supportive environment to grow physically and mentally. The students will be encouraged to take ownership of this project.

The project can help all ages and abilities as they will be expected to grow produce, prepare invoices and receipts, sales and marketing and ordering of supplies together with limited cash handling. This will offer them the opportunity to develop and use a wide range of skills.

As well as learning basic horticultural skills it will help with personal development working as an individual and as part of a team. This inevitably leads to increased literacy (i.e. reading seed packets and following instructions) and numeracy (how much fertiliser per square metre), understanding and decision making and hopefully increasing employability. This could also help the students to get further qualifications and maybe find other careers or career paths.

The project will also encourage and help appreciate the benefits of a healthy sustainable lifestyle that can be adapted to a home environment and a green gym.

Learning about the environment in a hands on way, such as the importance of insects, damage by chemicals, fly tipping, water conservation and over use of natural resources may change people's views and habits.

Socially it is hoped that by understanding and taking part in a project like this will help each student and their friends to respect living spaces of other people and communities.

The project team is primarily seeking Area Committee funding to assist in the purchasing of the Poly Tunnel which is estimated at an overall cost of £2,200.

#### **8.2.12 Citizens Advice North Herts**

Citizens Advice North Hertfordshire (CANH) is an independent local charity providing a free, confidential information and advice service. They provide the advice people need for the problems they face, and improve the policies and practices that affect people's lives. They rely heavily on volunteers and are equipped to respond to any issue, covering areas including benefits, debt, employment and housing amongst many others. Their advice is delivered face-to-face from 12 outlets, including housing offices, community centres, county courts, food banks, as well as via telephone, email and access to reliable online information.

This grant application was brought to the Letchworth Councillors in March and grant funding of £8,415 has been provided from their discretionary budgets. On the recommendation of members and on the basis that the service covers all of the district, the remaining £11,585 is now being sought from the remaining four Area Committees and divided by per capita percentage.

They are therefore seeking a contribution of **£1,860** from the Baldock & District Area Committee towards the fit out of a new head office in Letchworth following a move to new premises. The relocation is required as they need more space and a secure long-term home. The current Letchworth office has a tiny waiting room, not enough interview rooms, no training room and nowhere near enough desk space for staff and volunteers. The current rent is £18,000 per year and the landlord wants to raise it to £25,000. The current 3 year lease ends in June 2016. The new premises in 49 Station Road is owned by the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation and offers much better

value for money with approximately twice the floor area for £19,800 per year on a 15 year lease. It will enable an increase from 3 to 5 interview rooms to see more clients face-to-face clients, double the Advice line phone capacity, and train more volunteers. More efficient hot-desking is planned in order to maximise use of office space. Demand from clients has risen by 30% over the past two years, and volunteer numbers have risen over 10% over the past 6 months. They aim to double the number of advice calls handled to 2,000 per year, dramatically increase the amount of financial capability training offered to reduce debt issues, and expand the provision of energy advice to relieve fuel poverty and improve energy efficiency. They now have a member of staff trained to undertake thermal imaging to inform residents where energy efficiency improvements could be most effective. It will enable them to continue their core work to support the most vulnerable people across North Hertfordshire with benefits, debt, housing, employment and family issues.

The new premises contains the last remaining original Parker and Unwin shop front in Letchworth, and the Heritage Foundation has agreed to pay for an external refurbishment and internal strip out of the building, to include new heritage windows and restoration of the original shop front. The CANH will pay for the creation of four new interview rooms, flooring, lighting, power and data, additional desks, chairs and telephones, security alarm, an accessible toilet, as well as upgrades to kitchen, toilets, heating and ventilation systems.

CANH are seeking grant funding of £20,000 from North Hertfordshire District Council towards the cost of the fixtures and fittings for the new premises.

The Letchworth head office is open for drop-in five mornings a week and appointments in the afternoons. The new premises will have a much bigger waiting room, 5 interview rooms instead of 3 and a dedicated training and Adviceline room as well as more office space generally. This will make it possible to recruit more volunteers, see more clients, answer more calls, and offer more preventative work such as financial capability training to reduce debt issues, and energy advice to reduce fuel poverty and improve energy efficiency. It will also assist the organisation by providing a secure foundation on which they can build to diversify the funding for the future.

In 2015, Citizens Advice North Herts supported almost 5,400 individual clients with over 11,000 issues (up from 4,500 with 10,000 issues in 2014/15). 10% of clients are from the Baldock area covered by the local area committee. The CANH's digital advice screen in the Baldock Community Centre is well used and allows residents to access the information they need, enabling CANH to manage increasing demands on the service. For those who need in-depth advice, most residents from this area use the main office in Letchworth or call for telephone advice. The move to the new premises in Station Road will allow them to meet growing demand both for face-to-face and telephone services, and train volunteers from across the district.

Benefits for clients from this area in 2015 included over £102,000 in financial outcomes generated. Broken down by ward this equated to £11,000 for Arbury residents, £56,000 in Baldock Town, and £35,000 in Weston and Sandon. Most of this relates to securing disability benefits for those who need this support. These benefits make a huge difference to quality of life, and reduce the demand on health, statutory and other voluntary sector services. While national success rates for Disability Living Allowance applications are 60%, our specialist caseworkers and highly-trained volunteers have a near 100% success rate.

A comparison of Baldock area issues in 2015 relative to the average for North Herts show that there is a significantly higher demand for benefits advice in this area (44% of the top five advice issues, compared to 34% in North Herts). Much of this related to a

high demand for Attendance Allowance and Disability Living Allowance, often required by the elderly and disabled. There is a lower than average demand for debt advice (17% in Baldock area, compared to 24% in North Herts), and for housing advice (13% compared to 17% for the district). Where there were debt issues in the area, almost half (48%) related to rent arrears with housing associations, higher than the district average of 35%. Levels of council tax arrears were significantly lower at 24%, compared to a North Herts average of 34% in 2015. In terms of housing, issues with private rented sector housing were more prominent in this area at 36% compared to 27% across the district. And issues with owner occupied housing were also significantly higher with 25% of all issues supported across the district coming from this area.

Members should be aware that, North Hertfordshire District Council currently provides the CANH with a three yearly Memorandum of Understanding of £145,430 towards the annual running costs, in addition a further £25,000 annually towards the cost of a court worker in order to best reduce incidence of homelessness. There are also in-kind contributions in terms of rate relief of approximately £20,000 on three premises in Letchworth, Hitchin and Royston. Also rent subsidies, in-kind contribution of maintenance on the NHDC premises at Thomas Bellamy House in Hitchin and Royston Town Hall Annex, as outlined below:

Level of Subsidised Rents

Thomas Bellamy House & Royston Town Hall Annex 6,000 per site

Service Charges (In Kind)

Thomas Bellamy House £4,482 & Royston Town Hall Annex £8,804

In 2010 the CANH moved offices from the Old Grammar School building on the Broadway to its current location on Leys Avenue. To assist in this process the CANH was awarded a £35,000 capital grant via the NH LSP in the administering of the Performance Review Grant funding (Treasury Funds) passed on via HCC.

Comparison with other Hertfordshire authorities has demonstrated a continuing desire by the majority of authorities to maintain adequate funding for CAB advice services, albeit the amounts vary considerably from authority to authority. The population statistics also give a very approximate indication of potential level of demand for the services provided, but much will depend on levels of deprivation, priority areas for the individual authority i.e. homelessness, levels of debt etc.

**For 2014/15, figures were:**

District / Borough	Population	Funding provided to CAB	Other information
North Herts	131,000	£145,430	plus <i>(as stated above)</i>
Broxbourne	95,700	£144,000	plus £39k for specialist (housing) court worker
Stevenage	86,000	£170,000	
East Herts	143,000	£129,000	(13/14 figures)
Hertsmere	102,400	£215,000	
Dacorum	149,700	£172,000	
Welwyn Hatfield	116,000	£80,750	
Watford	95,500	£243,692	
Three Rivers	90,400	£297,340	

The above table may be of assistance to Members in order to set the local figures into a County wide context. In discussions between senior officers the CANH board of trustees, the CANH were reluctant to consider any arrangement with NHDC to use a floor of the Council Offices for their operations as they preferred to maintain a visible 'independence' from the council for their clients (albeit such arrangements exist at authorities such as St Albans). Consequently this course of action would not have proved practical, as the timescale for the completion of the newly refurbished Council Offices would be too late for the relocation of the CANH due to the lease at their current premises ceasing prior to this date.

### **8.3 Community update**

#### **8.3.1 Ashwell Parish Rooms – Window Replacement via s106 / UU Contributions**

A further 40% (£3,978) of the overall costs (£13,478) to replace the old metal single glazed windows at the Parish Rooms has been processed for release to cover the actual installation of the newly constructed window units.

All being well it is hoped that the works will be completed by the end of May when the final retention of £1,378 is likely to be drawn down.

#### **8.3.2 Other Baldock initiatives the CO has been involved with:**

- Initial arrangements being considered re this year's Chartered Fair
- Advice & support given to town events & festivals
- Funding advice re enhancements at Weston Village Hall
- s106 / Planning Contributions advice to Ashwell Parish Council
- Guidance re Baldock & Bygrave Neighbourhood Plan
- Project & funding advice to Green Shoots project group
- Advice to Baldock Branch - British Legion re Armed Forces Day
- Enhancements works to Old Youth Wing at the Community Centre
- Funding advice Letchworth GC Rugby Football Club

### **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 Baldock 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. However the 2016/17 baseline budgets for all Area Committees have been reduced by around 50% across the board, as part of the Council's ongoing budgetary and spending review.
- 10.2 Appendix 1 provides details of the 2016/17 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 1<sup>st</sup> October 2010, a major piece of legislation. The Act also created a new Public Sector Equality Duty, which came into force on the 5<sup>th</sup> 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 2016/17.
- 15.2 Appendix 2 – Ward Grant Form – Radwell Village Hall
- 15.3 Appendix 3 – Grant Form – Stevenage Football Club Foundation
- 15.4 Appendix 4 – Ward Grant Form – Ashwell Village Museum
- 15.5 Appendix 5 – Grant Form – Rotary Club of Baldock
- 15.6 Appendix 6 – Grant Form – Baldock Town Twinning Association
- 15.7 Appendix 7 – Grant Form – Balstock
- 15.8 Appendix 8 – Grant Form – Baldock Senior Club
- 15.9 Appendix 9 – Ward Grant Form – Weston Village Hall
- 15.10 Appendix 10 – Ward Grant Form – Rushden Village Hall
- 15.11 Appendix 11 – Grant Form – Letchworth GC Rugby Football Club
- 15.12 Appendix 12 – Grant Form – Green Shoots
- 15.13 Appendix 13 – Grant Form – Citizens Advice North Herts

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## **17. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

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