

TITLE OF REPORT: CHAMPION NEWS AND FINANCE REPORT

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF POLICY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise the Committee on the current expenditure and balances of the Area Committee delegated budgets.
- 1.2 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.
- 1.3 To advise the Committee of the activities and schemes with which the Community Development Officer has been involved.
- 1.4 To bring to the Committee's attention some important community based activities that will be taking place during the next few months.

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 North Herts Minority Ethnic Forum Member's Surgery**

The surgery took place on Friday 27th May 2011, with only a few people attending raising issues. Discussion is taking place with the Forum about a suitable date for future surgeries. Members will be kept informed.

3.2 Hitchin Museum

North Herts District Council have received a request from Hitchin Bridge Club to investigate the possibility of the club taking up use of the Museum building, once it is vacated by the museum service, when it moves into the town hall facility, following the refurbishment.

However, it is understood there are covenants in place on the Museum building regarding its use which require attention to ensure that any such possibility would be in full accord with the buildings future use.

These investigations will also need to be undertaken with regard to the overall town hall refurbishment project plan, timing for the vacation of the museum premises, as well as consideration of its use by other groups, who may wish to secure office / community space in that building too, were it to become available.

3.3 **Bluebell Children's Centre**

The Children's Centre is now firmly established in its own building in the grounds of Highbury School, although they still use St John's Community Centre for some activities.

The centre has started a gardening club which has been a great success with Families and a Teddy Bear's Picnic was held on Wednesday 22nd June, 2011, to celebrate the 50th birthday of the Pre-school Learning Alliance.

3.4 **Member School Surgeries**

The surgeries took place the week beginning the 20th June, 2011. Unfortunately The Priory School had to cancel their surgery due to another commitment. Updates will be available at the meeting from the Hitchin Boys and Hitchin Girls surgeries. It is hoped to re arrange the Priory School surgery in July, before the end of the school year. Members will be notified.

3.5 **Charlton Society**

The Charlton Society has been working on a Village Plan in consultation with the villagers and it is hoped that this will be completed by September 2011. They would like to present the plan to the Area Committee at the November 2011 meeting.

3.6 **Rhythms of the World**

The application to vary the ROTW Premises Licence, to raise the permitted sound levels was approved by the North Herts District Licensing Committee on Monday 20th June, 2011.

3.7 **The Voice of Hitchin Youth Talent Competition**

The Voice Talent Competition takes place on Saturday 25th June, 2011, at Hitchin Town Hall. There are 16 entries with various talents ranging from Irish Dancing to a Comedian, including dancing, singing, acoustic guitar, break dancing/body popping and Indian drums. An update will be given to Members at the meeting.

3.8 **Hitchin Area Work Programme**

The updated Hitchin Area Committee Work programme is attached as Appendix C.

3.9 **Highways Work Programme**

The updated Highways Work Programme is attached as Appendix D.

4. **FINANCE REPORT & FUNDING DECISIONS TO BE MADE**

4.1 The Committee is asked to note the budgetary expenditure, balances and carry forwards from the Development Budgets and the Visioning Budgets

4.2 The Committee's updated Annual Grant and Development Discretionary Budget spreadsheet is attached as Appendix A.

4.3 The Committee is asked to consider a grant award of £946.00 to The North Herts Minority Ethnic Forum in respect of an upgrade of the centre's 12 computers that were originally donated to them by North Hertfordshire College.

The computers are in regular use enabling IT training to members of local communities in particular those from the BME community. In addition the IT provision has helped many parents over the years in supporting their families and children at home.

Please see – Appendix B.

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 In the past few years, given the significant carry forward for Area Committee Development budgets, there has been no inflationary allowance other than for MoU's, and the baseline for 2011/12 was the same as 2010/11.

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 funding proposals for Area Committee Discretionary Development Funds.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 That the Committee endorses the actions taken by the Community Development Officer to promote greater community capacity and well-being.

- 9.2 That the Committee is asked to note the budgetary expenditure and balances carried forward from the Visioning, Development and Ward budgets.
- 9.3 That the Committee consider the level of funding awarded to The North Herts Minority Ethnic Forum – Appendix B

10. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 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 allocation of funds will improve the services provided by the local organisations and groups that are available and accessed by various members of the community.
- 10.4 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.

11. APPENDICES

- 11.1 Appendix A - Annual Grant and Development Discretionary Budget Update
- 11.2 Appendix B – North Herts Minority Ethnic Forum Grant Form
- 11.3 Appendix C – Hitchin Area Committee Work Plan 2011/2012
- 11.4 Appendix D - Highways Work Programme 2011/2012

12. CONTACT OFFICERS

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13. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 13.1 Review of Policies and Procedures for Financial Assistance to Voluntary and Community Organisations, November 2002.
- 13.2 Community Governance Reviews – Full Council Meeting 25th February 2010.