

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 Hitchin Primary Schools Fair**

On a very wet Saturday in July the first Hitchin Primary Schools Fair took place. Although very wet the response of the residents to this Fair was very positive and the participating Schools have planned to run this again in 2012.

3.2 Member School Surgeries

Unfortunately the second Priory School surgery was again cancelled at very short notice. Arrangements will be made in September, 2011, for the Autumn Term surgeries in December 2011.

Issues raised at the Boys and Girls Schools surgeries included, cycle routes, cinema, parks for teenagers, bus services, The Dell, homeless people and Town Rangers.

3.3 Hitchin Festival

Once again Hitchin Festival was very successful and the dates for next year are Saturday 30th June, 2012, until Sunday 22nd July, 2012. Events for December 2011 are now being planned and the Christmas Events programme will be available the middle of November, 2011.

3.4 Community Reassurance Event

The Community Reassurance Event took place in Bearton Ward on Friday 29th July, 2011.

Fire fighters called on 300 houses, in the area and gave out safety advice, installed 2 smoke alarms and will return in the future to carry out Household Safety checks.

Other advice was given out by the Safer Neighbourhood Team and volunteers from the Crime Prevention Panel.

NHDC Waste Management and Veolia swept roads & pathways and litter picked the area. They also removed 13 examples of graffiti.

NHDC Grounds Maintenance and John O'Connor cut back trees, tidied the area and also inspected play areas and the multi use games area.

It was a positive day with the agencies working together in partnership and reassuring the community.

3.5 **Rhythms of the World**

The Festival in 2012 will take place on the 13th and 14th July, 2012.

3.6 **Alcohol Awareness Month**

North Herts District Council and partners delivered a number of activities in the area during Alcohol Awareness Month. The Hitchin Leisure Centre had an exhibition and there was an internal display at the Council Offices.

The Authority also supported, in partnership with the Fire and Rescue Service, the Pubwatch 'Beer Mat' campaign. Hitchin BID helped fund the beer mats and these were circulated through out the area. The beer mats promoted responsible drinking and warned against the effects of drink driving.

The Voice of Hitchin Youth also had an exhibition at a Town Talk and Hitchin Area Committee meeting and at the recent Talent Competition.

3.7 **Westmill Community Centre**

Interviews for the post of Centre Manager at Westmill have taken place and Ward Members notified.

A celebration of the work of the current Centre Manager and a presentation will take place on Saturday 24th September from 5pm onwards.

3.8 **TASTE**

The Taste Event, which gives a platform for youth groups to showcase their activities for young people, takes place on Saturday 1st October, 2011, in the Market Place.

3.9 **Hitchin Youth Trust**

The Trust is having an official opening of the newly refurbished Youth Rooms on Saturday September 3rd, 2011, between 14.30 and 15.30 hours. The invitation is open to all including people involved in youth activities who may be interested in making use of the rooms.

3.10 **Hitchin Area Work Programme**

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

3.11 **Highways Work Programme**

The updated Highways Work Programme is attached as Appendix C.

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 Members are requested to consider the allocation to Highways projects from the Visioning budget, in particular to increase the Junction Protection scheme contribution to £3,333 making the Committee's total Highways allocation £10,833, including the investigative works referred to in 4.4.
- 4.4 Members are requested to consider an additional Highways scheme for investigative work on pedestrian islands in the vicinity of Our Lady's Primary School at a cost of £1,250.
- 4.5 Members are requested, in order to reduce the deficit on the Visioning budget, to reduce the allocation to Bancroft Gardens to £26,403. The allocation to Bancroft Gardens will be reinstated again in 2012/13 budget, as this allocation will not be required within this financial year.
- 4.6 Members are requested to consider the allocation of £2,000 to support Oughton Play Project and £2,000 to support Purwell Play project from the Central Area Grants.
- 4.7 Oughton Ward Members have agreed to allocate £2,000 for the Oughton Play Project from their Community Projects allocation. A verbal update will be given regarding the Walsworth Ward members decision..

The project is also supported by allocations from County Councillors Locality Budget.
- 4.8 Priory Ward Members have agreed to allocate £3,000 from their Ward Budget to replace the fencing at Smithsons Recreation Ground.

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 20010/11.

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 considers and confirms the levels of funding committed to the initiatives detailed in 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6 and note the proposed commitments from the respective Ward Member Budgets in 4.7 and 4.8 of this report.

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 – Hitchin Area Committee Work Plan 2011/2012
- 11.4 Appendix C - 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.