

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 Primary Schools Fair**

The Primary Schools Fair took place on Saturday 21st April, 2012. Eleven Primary Schools took part and this year it stayed dry! It was visited by lots of children and parents but also visitors. This Fair will become an annual event and in 2013 will be held on Saturday 27th April.

3.2 Member School Surgeries

The School surgeries took place in March in The Priory School and Girls School. Unfortunately the Boys School Surgery did not take place due to a communication breakdown. Issues discussed were Churchgate, shops, the Market, Bancroft Gardens, litter, transport and train and bus prices, amongst other matters.

A shelter for young people to meet sit and talk was discussed in both schools and it was suggested this could be considered as part of the refurbishment proposals at the King Georges skate park and also at Bancroft Gardens.

The Summer term surgeries will take place in June, week beginning 18th, and Members will be advised of confirmed dates and asked for their availability.

3.3 Westmill Community Day

Meetings are being held through CAYPOW (Children and Young People of Westmill) to have a Community Day on Westmill in August. It is hoped that the community of Westmill will get involved and that this could become an annual event.

3.4 **Hitchin Swimming Pool**

Members will recall that the Area Committee funded the additional opening hours at the Swimming Pool during the Summer 2011. Over the past 4 years of this initiative numbers accessing the Summer extra hours sessions have increased substantially.

In 2011, 218 swimmers used the pool during the extra hours and it seems the users were adults who work during the day and wish to use the pool later in the day, which was the initial reasoning behind initiative. With the Olympics this year there may well be a further increase in demand with more people considering swimming. The management of the Swimming Pool is therefore happy to offer the service this Summer with the support of funding from the Area Committee.

The amount of £2,212 was set aside in 2011 of which £2,172 was used.

A recommendation regarding this matter is at 9.4 of this report and the grant application form is presented at Appendix D.

3.5 **Lancaster Community Group**

Residents of Lancaster Avenue and Lancaster Road in Hitchin have formed a Lancaster Community Group (Hitchin), with the aim of running events to generate community spirit and strengthening social and community links within the local area. The Committee fast tracked a £250 start up grant to the group and the Bearton Ward Members funded £500 for their proposed Jubilee celebrations taking place on the 2nd of June. They plan to have an annual street party and other events during the year.

3.6 **Vaisakhi**

The procession took place on Saturday 14th April, 2012, with no issues. The orange ribbons decorating Hitchin were not placed by the organisers of Vaisakhi, but by a separate organisation trying to highlight the injustice of Sikh people within India.

3.7 **Hitchin Health Awareness Day**

The annual Hitchin Health Awareness Day takes place on Saturday 26th May in the Market Place, Hitchin, from 9.30am – 1.30pm. This event has become a very popular event in Hitchin's annual events calendar, with organisations offering health related advice and information.

3.8 **Voice of Hitchin Youth**

The Voice of Hitchin Youth had a stall on Hitchin Market Place on Saturday 5th May, 2012, where they raised awareness of the Youth Council and gathered opinions about 'dark alleys' in Hitchin. The plan is to present the information gathered to the Area Committee at the meeting in July, 2012.

3.9 **North Herts Minority Ethnic Forum**

A number of issues were discussed at the recent Members Surgery at the North Herts Minority Ethnic Forum. These are being addressed by officers and the Councillors present with feedback given to the NHMEF regarding results.

3.10 **Cadwell Lane - Metal and Waste Recycling High Court Appeal**

Leave has been granted by a Judge for a full appeal to proceed in respect of the above. The Court has advised that a full Court of Appeal hearing should be held no later than November 2012, although this could change.

3.11 **Rotary Olympics**

The Rotary Olympics and re launch of the Hitchin Half Hard Marathon takes place on the weekend 7th and 8th July 2012. It is hoped that the Half Hard Marathon will become an annual event.

3.12 **King George Skatepark Update**

The group of young people have agreed the final design for the improvements to the skatepark at King Georges and are awaiting the Groundwork Landscape Architect to draw up the plan. A consultation will take place re this plan at an event and competition on Sunday 3rd June. Following the consultation the plans will either be confirmed or edited, quotes for the works then sought and a programme of fundraising drawn together to complete the project.

It is hoped that a presentation from the young people of the final plans with an update, will come to the July 2012 Area Committee meeting.

3.13 **Walsworth Festival**

This very popular Community Festival takes place on Sunday 20th May and unfortunately it could be the last one unless volunteers come forward, as a number of the current committee are retiring this year and it is felt that the Festival needs younger people to help organise it.

3.14 **Hitchin Area Work Programme**

The Hitchin Area Committee Work programme 2011/2012 is attached as Appendix B. The Committee are requested to consider what to carry forward to the 2012/13 Work Programme and to add any additional items.

3.15 **Highways Work Programme**

The updated Highways Work Programme is attached as Appendix C.

3.16 **Events**

Saturday 2nd June – Councillors Surgery in Market Place
Sunday 3rd June – King Georges Skate park consultation
Saturday 30th June – Hitchin Festival begins
Saturday 30th June – Voice of Hitchin Youth Talent Competition
Saturday 7th July – Hitchin Rotary Olympics
Sunday 8th July - Hitchin Hard Half Marathon
Saturday 14th/Sunday 15th July - Rhythms of the World

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 That the Committee consider a Grant Award to Hitchin Swimming Pool, for extra hours opening for the Summer season 2012.

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 2012/13.
- 6.2 The spreadsheet also details the pre-allocations carried forward from the previous financial year 2011/12 to the current financial year 2012/13.

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 a grant award of £2,300 to Hitchin Swimming Pool for the provision of additional opening hours over the Summer season 2012 as set out in 3.4. (Appendix D).

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
- 11.3 Appendix C – Highways Work Programme 2012/2013
- 11.4 Appendix D – Hitchin Swim Centre – Grant Application

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.