

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 Play Rangers**

Play Rangers provide free of charge drop in play sessions in parks and recreation grounds around the District during the school holidays. Sessions are targeted at children aged 4 -11 years old but children younger than this are welcome to attend if a parent/carer stays and supervises them.

During the summer holidays there were five teams - one operating across each of the five committee areas. Each team runs for three weeks. This year with additional funding from the Hitchin Committee (an underspend from the previously funded Purwell Play project) an additional fourth week was provided in Hitchin..

Twenty sessions were delivered in Bancroft Gardens, and eight sessions in Broadmead play area, St John's playing field, Walsworth Common and Purwell recreation ground. Sites are selected in order to get an even distribution across the town taking into account the suitability for a session - in particular parking, access and safety. No delivery took place on the Westmill Estate due to the two week Community Play Project operating there this summer. Previously delivered sessions in Ransoms Recreation Ground and KGV playing fields did not take place due to repeated low attendance.

In total, just over 1000 places were taken up over the four weeks - and so the additional funding from the area committee enabled 250 additional attendances.

Bancroft was by far the most popular site, benefiting from having a naturally high footfall. The four neighbourhood sites rely on families responding to publicity and so it is expected attendance rates are lower. Broadmead and Walsworth were new sites this year and were well attended, and will definitely be returned to next year. Purwell is also generally well supported. St John's was not well supported, however feedback from a couple of parents was that a local school did not hand out the publicity, this is being investigated.

3.2 **Rhythms of the World**

The organisers announced that the festival will not take place at Hitchin Priory from 2013. The organisers are now looking for an alternative site for the 2013 Festival. The Committee will be kept informed of any progress.

3.3 **R.I.S.E.**

Relationships, Identity, Self Esteem/Belief/Awareness, Educated choices.

Further discussion has taken place with the partners in the Project after the Committee's decision to defer the application until the November meeting. A further presentation will take place at this meeting to give Members, as requested, more information.

3.4 **YPFN Project**

The Young People's Friendly Neighbourhood Project continues to work in Westmill and Purwell running Youth Clubs in the two areas during this summer.

Included in the project are the improvements to the King George V Skate Park and a meeting is being held to discuss these improvements on Monday 22nd October, 2012. Members will be orally updated regarding this at the Area Committee meeting.

Also included in the project is the YOR Radio which held it's first Road Show in Hitchin Market Place. The event was organised and run by a core group of young people and it was well received. YOR Radio is working on becoming a constituted group which will support the sustainability of the group after March 2013.

Work continues on the NEET (Not in Education or Training) part of the project with a number of young people, on a 1-1 basis, getting support into work or education.

3.5 **TASTE Event 2012**

The TASTE Event took place in the Market Square on a lovely sunny October day. A number of youth organisations took part and with the attraction of YOR Radio and the live performances by bands and singers from North Herts College, the Market Square was very lively. The event has been booked for next year in September.

A similar event for Fifty + has been suggested. This may be in the Spring of 2013 and the Community Development Officer welcomes suggestions for a name. Members will be kept updated.

3.6 **Hitchin Swimming Pool Extra Hours**

During the 2012 season the Swimming Pool has seen the highest attendance since Hitchin Area Committee started supporting the later opening hours for the Outdoor Pool. 312 swimmers used the extra hours. The weather this season was variable throughout with very hot evenings followed by a down pour, however this didn't put off regulars using the facility.

The 2012 extra hours cost £1,925.80 Members are asked to consider whether they wish to continue to support this initiative in 2013.

3.7 **King George V Skate Park**

Funding towards the improvements, which have been agreed by the young people are now being sought through Section 106 Funding and other grant funders. A request for monetary support from the Committee for the project is being sought tonight. Area Committee funding will help 'kick start' the project and enable firm designs to be drawn up and funding sought from other agencies.

3.8 **Young Parents Group**

The Young Parents Group meet at Oughton Children's Centre and use the crèche to enable the Young Parents to meet without distractions. The work with the young parents covers behaviour, drug and alcohol awareness, debt and budgeting advice, sexual health and First Aid amongst others. The crèche requires three workers because of ratio. The group are now having one activity a month with the children so as to reduce costs with the crèche. A funding request has been received to help with the crèche costs and Representatives of the group will be presenting tonight to enable Members to get a fuller picture.

3.9 **Transport Issues for County Councillor Consideration for Highway Locality Budget Funding**

Under the new arrangements with Hertfordshire County Council, NHDC will be utilising Champion's News at Area Committees to identify specific issues of concern they would request the County Councillor considers for funding through the Highway Locality Budget. Two issues for consideration at this area committee are:

Periwinkle Lane, Hitchin - Grass verge parking

For a number of years residents have been parking vehicles on grass verges on the north side of Periwinkle Lane, Hitchin. A large number of complaints have been received regarding this and it is requested that the County Councillor considers the implementation of a Traffic Regulation Order and accompanying signs ref NP 428.1 which will allow Civil Enforcement Officers to issue penalty Charge notices for this offence.

Cadwell Lane, Hitchin - Experimental Traffic Regulation Order

Residents of Cadwell Lane, Hitchin have for a number of years, been impacted by heavy goods vehicles associated with the Nationwide Metal Recycling Centre parking close to residential properties throughout the night despite the centre not opening till 7am in the morning. At present the centre has no restrictions on the activities of said vehicles as is the norm in other cases and no parking restrictions to prevent parking are in place. Despite numerous legal challenges by Hertfordshire County Council to impose a condition on movements of associated site vehicles the problem remains causing a high level of disruption and impacting on the quality of life for local residents.

NHDC would like to request the County Councillor considers funding for an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order that prevents vehicles over a certain weight category parking from the traffic lights at Cadwell Lane right down through all public Highway up to the NMR site also including Girdle Rd and Hillfield Ave, and Wilbury Way up to the Girdle Rd junction (or the end of the residential section).

The experimental order is proposed on the following basis:

- For preventing the use of the road by vehicular traffic of a kind which, or its use by vehicular traffic in a manner which, is unsuitable having regard to the existing character of the road or adjoining property, and
- For preserving or improving the amenities of the area through which the road runs

More specifically promotion of an experimental order as to:

- Prohibit or restrict the use of heavy commercial vehicles (except in such cases as specified in the order) in such zones or on such roads as may also be specified as considered expedient for preserving or improving the amenities in the area or some parts of the area.

3.10 **Cycle Rack in Woodside Car Park**

A cycle rack at Woodside Car Park would cost approximately £700. This would accommodate 10 bikes and also include the cost of installation. Funding is being requested from Hitchin Area Committee as the cycle racks will be open for use by all residents of Hitchin.

3.11 **End of the Beginning**

A celebration to mark the closure of the Town Hall for refurbishment took place on Saturday 20th October 2012. The Hall was open during the day with displays by community groups and for people to look around and reminisce. In the evening there was a social event with music, food and speeches. Wine glasses with a Hitchin Town Hall and the year 2012 engraving, were for sale on the night and are for sale from the Town Centre Office. Bring them back in 2014 for the opening ceremony and get a free glass of wine.

3.12 **Voice of Hitchin Youth**

The Voice of Hitchin Youth held their AGM at Bancroft Youth Centre on 10th October 2012. A Chair, Secretary and Treasurer were appointed and there are 7 Members, a total of 10 young people representing each of the Senior Schools in Hitchin. The Voice are grateful to Youth Connexions for a new venue at Bancroft Youth Centre for meetings, now that the Town Hall is closed. Further information about the Voice and their plans will be given in a presentation to the Committee at the meeting.

3.13 **Hitchin Samaritans**

The Hitchin Samaritans have published their Annual Report and 2011 showed another year with growth of caller numbers particularly telephone contacts. 24,537 telephone calls were answered, 2,266 texts responded to and 63 face to face callers. Their monthly 'Feet on the Street' project has also proved very successful spending time in Hitchin Town Centre in the evenings talking to people especially youngsters. They have also initiated a joint initiative with Network Rail which has reduced the suicide rate by 11%.

The Samaritans in Hitchin need 100 volunteers to keep the branch running but not only for listening, they need admin, decorating, gardening and DIY and most importantly fundraising. For more information call 01462 455333 or email.

north-herts.volunteering@samaritanseast.org.uk.

3.14 **North Herts Minority Ethnic Forum Surgery**

A Councillors Surgery took place on Thursday 25th October 2012, at North Herts Minority Ethnic Forum, with few issues.

Another is being planned for Thursday 29th November 2012 with a new format to engage the Forum's clients. Member will be requested re their availability.

3.15 **School Surgeries**

Dates for Councillors to visit the three senior schools are being arranged for early December 2012 and Members will be kept informed re dates.

3.16 **Hitchin Area Work Programme**

The Hitchin Area Committee Work programme 2012/2013 is attached as Appendix B. This programme now includes Highways projects and the projects raised at the Hitchin Area Committee meeting on 17th July, 2012, re Section 106 / UU monies. This is a working document and amendments can be made at meetings

3.17 **Events 2012**

Friday 23rd November 2012 – Christmas Lights Switch On - 5pm – 8.30pm

Hitchin Initiative AGM The Sun Hotel 6.30pm

Saturday 1st December 2012 – Councillors Surgery

Sunday 9th December 2012 – Christmas Gala Day, Market Place – 10am – 4pm

Sunday 16th December 2012 – Father Christmas arrival

Thursday 19th December 2012 – Rotary Carols Market Place 8pm (St Mary's if wet)

4. **FINANCE REPORT & FUNDING DECISIONS TO B 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 Committee's updated Annual Grant and Development Discretionary Budget spreadsheet is attached as Appendix A.

4.3 The current level of unallocated funds within the Committee's Memorandum of Understanding budget is £2,610 and within the Central Area Grants budget is £18,890.

4.4 The current level of unallocated funds within the Ward Members Discretionary budget is £6,350.

4.5 That the Committee consider funding the joint partnership R.I.S.E project to a maximum of £5,000 as outlined by the group's earlier presentation and section 3.3 of this report.

Members to note that funds will remain within the Authority's budget and added to the initial £5,000 already received from Groundwork Herts to enable the delivery of the project.

4.6 That the Committee consider partnership funding for improvements to the Skate Park at King George V playground, to cover initial costs & design fees up to a maximum of £5,000 as outlined in 3.7 of this report.

Members to note that officers will look towards sourcing further funds via the Planning Contributions route re the installation part of the project.

4.7 That the Committee consider granting £573 to the Young Parents Group at Westmill as outlined in 3.8.

4.8 That the Committee consider underwriting £700 to install a cycle rack at Woodside Car Park as outlined in 3.10.

Members to note that officers will also look towards sourcing funds for this project via the Planning Contributions route.

4.9 Hitchin Town Centre Initiative are considering 'free after three' parking in St Mary's and Biggin Lane on a Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday for a six month trial. This will cost £11,800 and they are requesting a grant towards this from Hitchin Area Committee. More information will be available from Town Centre Manager Keith Hoskins in his report.

4.10 That the Committee consider granting £250 set up costs to a the 'Friends of Oughton Children's Centre' who have recently adopted a Constitution and opened a Bank Account in order to support the Children's Centre with funding etc.

4.11 That the Committee note that £500 was fast tracked, with the approval of the Chair and Vice Chair, to a youth group working in Westmill that had been donated a PS3

and required equipment to use it. The group of young people that they youth leaders are working with are particularly vulnerable and this money will give them resources to enable the work to continue.

- 4.12 That the Committee note Highbury Ward members granted £250 to Nursery Hill and Storehouse Lane residents for improvements to their area.

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 considers funding the joint partnership project to be known as R.I.S.E to a maximum of £5,000, as outlined in the group's presentation to the Committee and as referred to in 3.3 of this report.
- 9.4 That the Committee considers partnership funding for improvements to the Skate Park at King George V playground, to cover initial costs & design fees up to a maximum of £5,000 as outlined in 3.7 of this report.
- 9.5 That the Committee considers granting £573 in principle to Young Parents Group at Westmill as outlined in the group's presentation to the Committee and as referred to in 3.8 of this report.
- 9.6 That the Committee consider underwriting £700 for the installation of a cycle rack at Woodside Car Park as outlined in 3.10 of this report.
- 9.7 That the Committee consider the funding request to assist in implementing the 'Free after Three' parking trial period as presented by the Town Centre Manager and outlined in 4.9 of this report.
- 9.8 That the Committee consider granting £250 start up funding to 'Friends of Oughton Children's Centre' as outlined in 4.10 of this report
- 9.9 That the Committee approve the fast track sum of £500 to the youth group at Westmill as outlined in 4.11 of this report.
- 9.10 That the Committee note that the funding given by Highbury Ward Members to the Nursery Hill and Storehouse Lane residents as outlined in 4.12 of this report.
- 9.11 That the committee considers both Highways related requests, outlined in 3.9, are forwarded to the relevant County Councillor for potential funding through the Highway Locality Budget and whether any funding from the Area Committee would be available for contribution. Should the requests be forwarded for consideration, it is requested that the relevant County Councillor feeds back through Champion's News at the next Area Committee as to whether the scheme has successfully been awarded funding.

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 2012/2013

12. CONTACT OFFICERS

- 12.1 Margaret Bracey, Community Development Officer. Ext: 4830.
Email. margaret.bracey@north-herts.gov.uk

Contributors;

- 12.2 Liz Green
Head of Policy and Community Services
- 12.3 Shah Mohammed
Assistant Accountant

13. BACKGROUND PAPERS

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