

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

AGENDA ITEM No.

TITLE OF REPORT : CHAMPION NEWS AND FINANCE REPORT

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF POLICY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

PORTFOLIO HOLDER COUNCILLOR TRICIA COWLEY

1. SUMMARY

- 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 take place during the next few months.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Committee endorses the actions taken by the Community Development Officer to promote greater community capacity and well-being.
- 2.2 That the Committee is asked to note the budgetary expenditure and balances carried forward from the Visioning, Development and Ward Budgets. Spreadsheet attached as Appendix A.
- 2.3 That the Committee considers funding the Charlton Society – details to follow
- 2.4 That the Committee note the funding allocated by a Bearton Ward Member for the collection of dog waste.
- 2.5 That the Committee note the funding given by Priory Ward Members for financially assisting the purchase of 2000 spring flower bulbs to enhance the local environment.
- 2.6 That the Committee considers a grant award to fund additional Swimming Sessions at Hitchin Outdoor Pool during Summer 2013, noting the further information requested on usage figures.

Swimming usage figures are taken from half hourly visual head counts of customers using the pool. The vast majority are PAYP (pay as you play) and the facility therefore does not hold the records of such users. The sessions would have included a limited number of members who do a pay a monthly fee and that data could have been

provided. However the front of house system at the centre has recently been changed and the records do not cover the summer season.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To ensure that the Committee are kept informed of the work of the Community Development 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 and the guidance in the Grants procedure.
- 3.3 The awarding of financial assistance to voluntary organisations and the use of discretionary spending allows the Committee to further the aims and 'Priorities 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 EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS

- 5.1 Consultation with elected 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 Discretionary Development 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 A Area Committee Budget Spreadsheet, which relates to the Area Committee budget balances for the current financial year 2012/13.
- 7.2 The spreadsheet also details pre-allocated sums carried forward from the previous financial year 2011/12 including balances and past expenditure relating to the allocated and un-allocated Area Capital Visioning Budgets available to the Committee.
- 7.3 The current level of unallocated funds within the Committee's Central Area Grant Budget is £3,547.

7.4 The current levels of unallocated funds within the Committee's Ward Discretionary Budgets are:

Bearton Ward	£1,500
Highbury Ward	£1,500
Oughton Ward	£750
Priory Ward	£959
Walworth Ward	£1,500

7.5 The current level of unallocated funds within the Committee's MoU Budget is £2,610.

8. PROJECT/ACTIVITY/SCHEME DETAILS

8.1 Hitchin Shopmobility

Hitchin Shopmobility celebrated the Tenth Anniversary of their launch. It has been a very successful ten years. At the launch the Chair of Hitchin Shopmobility gave thanks to the volunteers, the Committee, Cane and Able and Waitrose.

8.2 Triangle Community Garden

In December the Triangle Community Garden planted a 'Tree of Life' to provide an opportunity for remembrance, contemplation and reflection following World Aids Day. The tree chosen was a Mulberry and will form part of the Triangle Garden's new 'community food forest' project.

8.3 K Entertainers

K Entertainers received a grant from the Area Committee for their 2012 Party Programme. They held four nights at the end of November 2012 where residents of Care Homes across the area were transported to a venue for a three course Christmas meal and a full programme of entertainment. The attendees had very enjoyable evenings.

8.4 Hitchin Christmas Tree Festival

The 2012 16th Hitchin Christmas Tree Festival took place over the weekend 8th and 9th December. There were 48 trees decorated by a wide variety of community organisations in Hitchin. This is a very popular Festival and there were large numbers attending on both days.

8.5 Bridging the Gap

A successful Inter-generational Art's project took place recently on Westmill. The project ran for four sessions with young and the not so young culminating with an exhibition of the art work on the 10th December 2012 at The Lawns. The project was intended to encourage understanding between generations to bridge the perception gap. Plans are being made for similar projects to enable this type of inter generational work to continue on Westmill.

8.6 Triangle Residents Association

It has reluctantly been agreed to wind up the Triangle Residents Association due to lack of support. There will be an AGM on 4th February 2013 to finalise the decision and to dispose of the funds to a suitable organisation. An article is planned for the

Comet to highlight the achievements of the association over the years.

8.7 North Herts Minority Ethnic Forum

A Councillors Surgery took place in November 2012 and was a little more successful. Another is planned for Thursday 24th January 2013 from 2pm to 3pm.

8.8 Hitchin Area Work Programme

The Hitchin Area Work Programme, including Highways Projects, is attached as Appendix C. This is a working document and amendments can be made at meetings or emailing the Community Development Officer.

8.9 Diary Dates 2013

Saturday 3rd February Councillors Surgery in Hitchin Market Place
Saturday 9th February Pancake Fayre in Hitchin Market Place
Tuesday 12th February Pancake Races in Hitchin High Street

8.10 Highways Matters

It is proposed that a section entitled ' Highways Matters ' is included within the Area Champion's News Report for each committee cycle to facilitate debate and enable appropriate feedback on any of the proposed or listed schemes.

Members attention is drawn to Appendix C Area Committee Work Programme, which lists and tracks the progress of joint funded Highways schemes or such proposals raised by the Committee.

New proposals will be logged on the form and forwarded to the respective Herts County Councillor for consideration.

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 includes discretionary grant aid/financial support. However, this does not include grants for district wide activities.

9.2 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.

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 has delegated powers to administer funds from the budgets described.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 In the past few years there has been no inflationary allowance to the main Area Committee Budget and the 2012/13 baseline budget has stayed the same as the previous year.
- 10.2 The former MoU Budget is subject to a 7.1% reduction each year through to financial year 2015/16.

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 that may arise.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 The Equality Act 2010 came into force on the 1st October 2010, a major piece of legislation. The Act also created a new Public Sector Equality Duty, which came into force on the 5th 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 Development 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 A – Annual Grant and Development Discretionary Budget Update
- 15.2 Appendix B – Charlton Society grant form to follow
- 15.3 Appendix C – Hitchin Area Committee Work Programme 2012/2013

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17. BACKGROUND PAPERS

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