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| *PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT | AGENDA ITEM No. |
| | 14 |

TITLE OF REPORT : CHAMPION NEWS AND FINANCE REPORT

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF POLICY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 To advise the Committee on the current expenditure and balances of the Area Committee.
- 1.2 To bring to the Committee's attention details of recent requests received for Area Committee 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 awarding support funding to Hitchin Society as set out in 8.6 of this report.

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.
- 3.4 Production of this report is a requirement of the 'Priorities for the District' in which the Community Development Officer is required to produce a formal report to the Area Committee 6 occasions per annum in line with the Civic Calendar.

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 Grant 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 (to follow), which relates to the Area Committee budget balances for the current financial year 2013/14.
- 7.2 The spreadsheet also details pre-allocated sums carried forward from the previous financial year 2012/13 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 £ ... **To be advised.**
- 7.4 The current levels of unallocated funds within the Committee's Ward Discretionary Budgets are:

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| Bearton | £1,500 |
| Highbury | £1,500 |
| Oughton | £1,000 |
| Priory | £1,000 |
| Walsworth | £1,500 |

8. PROJECT/ACTIVITY/SCHEME DETAILS

8.1 R.I.S.E. - Relationships, Identity, Self Esteem/Belief/Awareness, Educated Choices

The RISE School based project has finished and the Community based project, being delivered in three areas of Hitchin has now started.

The School project was very successful and a quote from the teacher involved at The Priory School is below:-

'RISE has been a very successful project with our students, they have thoroughly enjoyed the different range of activities during the lesson and have appreciated the chance to share their ideas. However, the best thing for me to see as a teacher was watching our students grow in confidence and self esteem. It has been a very worthwhile undertaking.

Thank you.'

8.2 NHMEF Surgery

A Surgery at North Herts Minority Ethnic Forum will take place on Friday 7th June at 2pm – 3pm. A different day of the week has been chosen to hold the Surgery, hopefully to try and attract more people to attend.

Would Members please let the Community Development Officer know if they are available for this Surgery.

8.3 Fells Close

The Community Development Officer, Anti Social Behaviour Officer and Cllr Judi Billing, Bearton Ward Councillor, met with residents of Fells Close, to discuss how to resolve the anti social issues they have reported in that area.

Positive actions have been agreed and funding has been received from Bearton Ward Members budget to support the necessary measures.

8.4 Hitchin Free School

The proposed Hitchin Free School approached the Community Development Officer for some community advice re their development of the school's community links. Community and volunteering is a vital part of the Free School's ethos and they plan to have a half day a week devoted to community work as well as aiming to bring the community to the school via a weekly assembly and also through various volunteering and learning projects.

The School is at the interview stage with the Department of Education and the organisers will know by the end of May whether they have been successful.

8.5 The Big Hitchin Tidy Up

The second Big Hitchin Tidy Up, co-ordinated by Hitchin Forum, under the Keep Britain Tidy umbrella, took place at 11 different sites in the town over the first May Bank Holiday weekend.

120 volunteers, including many children, gave their time on a sunny spring day to litter pick. A local Hitchin Nursery, Year 9 pupils from Priory School, Hitchin Bridge Club, Hitchin Fire Service and Friends of the Earth, amongst other local groups, took part in the tidy up. This was an excellent partnership event supported by North Herts District Council, Hitchin Initiative and The Comet.

8.6 Hitchin Society

Hitchin Society campaigns for the best of the past to be protected and enhanced for future generations to enjoy. The Society provides a programme of meetings with guest speakers and they publish newsletters.

The Society is also the local organiser for Heritage Open Days, a National event which takes place this year from Thursday 12th – 15th September.

Last year, sixteen venues were open, including The Biggin, The British Schools Museum, St Saviour's Almshouses and Triangle Community Garden. There were also 2 guided walks. More information on the website www.hitchinsociety.org.uk.

The application (Appendix C) is for funding to help with the promotion and advertising for the 2013 Heritage Open Days.

8.7 Vaisakhi 2013

The Vaisakhi procession took place through Hitchin on Saturday 13th April, 2013, and again was very successful.

A thank you from the Gurdwara to all who helped make the procession run so well has been received and particularly to Hitchin Area Committee for the funding towards the event.

8.8 Westmill Community Centre/CAYPOW.

Discussions have begun with the Management Committees of Westmill Community Centre and CAYPOW with regard to the new Community Centre with Youth facility.

Initial talks have been very positive and a consultation with local residents will take place shortly.

8.9 Primary School Fair

The third Primary School Fair took place in the Town Centre on the 27th April. Once again everyone had to dodge showers but it was very successful with cakes selling out and lots of participants in the games.

8.10 Vintage Taste

The first Vintage Taste event, for over 50s, took place in the Town Centre on 6th April. The weather was kind and the stall holders present indicated they would like to take part in a similar event next year.

The survey from Hitchin Senior Citizens Committee, to establish what activities the 50+ would like to have available for them was completed at the event and the results will be discussed at the next meeting to see if they can support/provide any activities required.

Initial results show that some of the activities requested are already available and it is just the information which is not widely available. How to remedy this will be part of the discussions.

8.11 Voice of Hitchin Youth

The Voice are holding their third Talent Competition on Saturday 22nd June, 2013 at Bancroft Youth Centre. The winners will have a slot at the Rhythms of the World Family Fun Day on Sunday 14th July.

The Voice members baked cakes and sold them at a stall on the Market Place on Saturday 4th May and funds raised will go towards expenses for the Talent Competition.

8.12 Repainting Lines at junction Nightingale rd / Walsworth rd, Hitchin

Terry Wilkinson, District Service Agent for Ringway has notified Cllr David Billing that the site has already been identified for inclusion within the planned road marking works across the District.

However, he was unable at the time to advise of a specific date as to when the works were likely to be completed, although the overall programme is to be systematically worked through over the next 4 months during the optimum weather period.

8.13 Play Rangers

Over the Easter Holidays, Play Rangers delivered sessions in Bancroft Gardens and Purwell Recreation ground. Despite the weather being unseasonably cold and wet there was good support from families at both sites and the teams received compliments about the value of the drop in free service and how good it is to be encouraged out into the parks. The Play Rangers will next deliver sessions in the summer Holidays.

8.14 Hitchin Festival

Hitchin Festival programmes will be available on 25th May and the Box Office opens 13th June 10am – 3pm Monday to Saturday.

8.15 Hitchin Area Update

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

8.16 Diary Dates 2013

Sunday 9th June – Hitchin Hard Half Marathon

Tuesday 11th June – St Michaels Community Centre Management Committee AGM

Saturday 15th June – Rotary Community Health Day

Tuesday 18th June – Westmill AGM

Monday 24th June - Hitchin Festival launch night

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 1 of the Localism Act 2011 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 2013/14 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 (to follow).
- 15.2 Appendix B – Hitchin Area Update 2013/2014
- 15.3 Appendix C - Grant Report for Hitchin Society

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17. BACKGROUND PAPERS

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