

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 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 awarding support funding to K Entertainers as set out in 8.7 of this report.
- 2.4 That the Committee considers awarding support funding to Angels Support Group as set out in 8.9 of this report.
- 2.5 That the Committee considers awarding support funding to Toque Tambor as set out in 8.11 of this report.
- 2.6 That the Committee note that a Bearton Ward Member funded a dog bin in the Ward.
- 2.7 That the Committee considers awarding support funding in relation to any potential Highways schemes as proposed and discussed under section 8.12 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 on 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 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 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 £21,950.

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

Bearton Ward	£1,176
Highbury Ward	£1,500
Oughton Ward	£800
Priory Ward	£800
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 School Holiday Lunch Provision

A Christian based organisation are proposing to provide lunches for families during the school holidays and will use Bancroft Hall for this purpose. The October 2013 half term holiday will be the first provision of this service. A local school has identified families who may benefit in addition to local people; this is also to provide 'holiday' support to children who would normally receive a free school meal during term time.

The CDO to provide an oral update at the meeting.

8.2 NHMEF Surgery

A surgery took place on the 4th October 2013, with one elected member present and a number of issues discussed and subsequently investigated.

The next surgery will be on Friday 10th January 2014 at 3pm – 3.30pm and Members are requested for their availability.

8.3 Youth Conference

A Youth Conference, for attendees from North Herts Senior Schools, is being held in the District Council Offices in Letchworth on Friday 13th December from 9am – 4.30pm. The Conference is being facilitated by the Voice of Hitchin Youth, Letchworth and Baldock Youth Council, Youth Connexions and officers from the NH Community Development Team.

A programme for the day with speakers and workshops is being planned by members of the Youth Councils. All Members are welcome to attend, but please let the CDO team know approximately when you will be attending in order that they can introduce you to attendees.

8.4 Smartys Day Nursery

Smartys Day Nursery celebrated its 20th anniversary on Saturday 14th September. The event was attended by past and present, children and parents. Long service certificates were presented to staff. The event was opened by Mrs Mick Furr MBE who gave a speech on the history of the Nursery. The Chair and members of the Management Committee were present and gave their thanks to the staff and Manager for all their hard work.

8.5 Hitchin School Surgeries

The School Surgery, planned for Hitchin Girls School during democracy week, unfortunately did not take place. It is therefore being re arranged to take place after half term. Members will be notified as soon as a date is agreed.

The Priory School Surgery took place on Tuesday 22nd October and an oral update will be given at the meeting.

8.6 **Mental Health Event**

The North Hertfordshire Health and Wellbeing Partnership organised the event '**Five Ways to Keeping Well**', on Thursday 10th October 2013, in Hitchin, to mark World Mental Health Day. North Herts has a slightly higher incidence of mental health conditions and related long term conditions than other districts in Hertfordshire, so this is a key area of work with local partners. The purpose of the event was to raise awareness of mental health issues, services available and promote the 'five ways to wellbeing'.

NHDC and MIND in Mid Herts, from the North Herts Health & Wellbeing Partnership, worked together to organise and run the event with funding provided by the Joint Commissioning Team.

A number of groups were invited to promote their organisations on the day, including the opportunity to pick up with further information about other services available in the area e.g. Hitchin Counselling Service, MIND in Mid Herts, Carers in Hertfordshire and Hertfordshire Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust. The event was well attended.

8.7 **KEntertainers**

K Entertainers were set up in 1990 and the group visits Care Homes and Sheltered Accommodation musically entertaining the residents with songs that they know and can sing along to. They are also available for special occasions. Their Constitution states their objective as 'provide free entertainment to the elderly, sick or disabled people within warden controlled complexes'.

Every year the Entertainers provide an evening of entertainment with Christmas dinner to over 400 people on four nights at the end of November.

The event takes place in Stevenage and transport is provided for all the attendees. A number of those attending the Christmas entertainment come from care homes and sheltered accommodation in Hitchin.

8.8 **Charlton Village Sign**

Designs have now been drawn up for the proposed Charlton Village Sign commemorating the birth of Bessemer in the village 200 years ago. Copies of these will be circulated at the meeting. A working party of the Charlton Society is in the process of getting quotes and also clarifying the possible positioning of the sign as well as whether there could be a sign at either end of the village.

Work has also started on a fund raising application to a local funder to get the balance of the costs required. Members will be updated on progress and will be requested to release the funds allocated for this in the budget, in due course.

8.9 **Angels Support Group**

Angels Support Group started in Hitchin, at the Oughton Children's Centre, in 2005, as a support group meeting for parents and carers of children diagnosed, or in the process of being diagnosed with ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) or ASD (Autistic Spectrum Disorder).

Over the years the group has grown in numbers supporting not only families in Hitchin but now Letchworth, Stevenage and Royston. The main source of funding for the group came via the Herts County Council Intervention Funding which will stop this year.

As a result the group may have to curtail some of their current activities depending on how successful they are with fund raising and funding applications to other external sources. They are however determined to continue the Hitchin meetings which have been invaluable to families in Hitchin over the years.

8.10 **Community Reassurance Event**

'The Blue Light Experience', part of North Herts Community Safety Partnership Reassurance Events, took place on Saturday 28th September 2013, in the Market Place.

It attracted between 600 – 800 people and gave members of the public not only an opportunity to see how the emergency services would operate in the event of a road traffic collision but also to receive advice on a number of topics, including personal safety, road safety and pedestrian awareness. Fire Investigation dogs were also there with their handler, plus various police and fire & rescue service vehicles.

The organiser said that the event helps to break down the barrier between the 'Blue Light' services and the general public and that it also helps deliver a safety message in a fun environment.

8.11 **Toque Tambor**

Toque Tambor have been teaching and performing Carnival music in Hitchin since 2002. They regularly appear at Rhythms of the World and support the Vaisakhi Procession, in April every year.

They meet at the Ravidassia Centre on Tuesday nights and they take part in larger carnival events such as Notting Hill and Luton Carnival and they also perform at weddings, family & social celebrations and corporate events.

Their membership ranges from age 14 - adults. Their primary aim is to increase their membership and attract more young people and adults from the local community, to take part in workshops and have the chance to learn a variety of percussion instruments in a fun environment and ultimately represent Hitchin in a vibrant explosion of music, colour and dance.

8.12 **Westmill Community Centre**

The consultation date for the proposed re development of John Barker Place and a new Community Centre, has been arranged for Wednesday 20th November from 2pm – 7pm, at the Community Centre. The plans will also be available for viewing a few days prior to and after the consultation.

8.13 **Hitchin Area Update & Highways Matters**

The Hitchin Area Update is attached as Appendix B. (Including Highways Matters)
This is a working document and amendments can be made at meetings or by emailing the Community Development Officer.

A section entitled ' Highways Matters ' is included within all the Area Champions' News Reports for each committee, designed primarily to facilitate debate and enable appropriate feedback on any of the proposed or listed schemes. This is to ensure that communication remains effective between District and County.

Any new proposals or revised schemes will be forwarded to the respective Herts County Councillor for consideration who will in turn report back and advise the Committee accordingly.

8.14 Hitchin Dates

Friday 22nd November 2013 – Christmas Lights switch on Town Centre 2pm – 8pm
Sunday 8th December 2013 – Markets Gala Day Town Centre 10am – 4pm
Wednesday 18th December 2013 – Rotary Carols Market Place 8pm
Friday 20th December 2013 – Father Christmas Arrival Market Place 3pm

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 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 – Hitchin Area Update 2013/2014
- 15.3 Appendix C – Grant Report for K Entertainers
- 15.4 Appendix D – Grant Report for Angels Support Group
- 15.5 Appendix E – Grant Report for Toque Tambor

16. CONTACT OFFICERS

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17. BACKGROUND PAPERS

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