

TITLE OF REPORT: GRANT APPLICATIONS AND COMMUNITY UPDATE

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 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 The Committee is asked to note the budgetary expenditure, balances and carry forwards from the Development, Visioning and Ward Budgets as set out in Appendix A.
- 2.2 That the Committee considers whether to provide a grant of £1500 to Rhythms of the World towards an arts outreach project. (as outlined in 8.1 and Appendix B).
- 2.3 That the Committee considers grant funding of £1500 to Box Cleve towards the cost of continuing non contact boxing project for disadvantaged children (as outlined in 8.2 Appendix C).
- 2.4 That the Committee considers grant funding from Walsworth Discretionary Ward budget from the 2013/14 carry forwards of £400 (in principle) towards the cost of decoration to the front exterior of the Walsworth Community Centre pending the outcome of the report on community centre leases by Cabinet In February (as outlined in 8.3 Appendix D)
- 2.5 That the Committee considers the allocation of £1500 in order to contribute towards the approximate £6k gross cost of the pilot of a Sunday bus service to / from Westmill Estate and Ninesprings, having taken consideration of officer advice (as outlined in 8.5)
- 2.6 That the Committee considers awarding support funding in relation to any potential Highways schemes as proposed and discussed under section 8.8 of this report.
- 2.7 That the Committee endorses the actions taken by the Community Officer to promote greater community capacity and well-being for Hitchin.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To ensure the Committee is kept informed of the work of the Community 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 the Grants policy.
- 3.3 The awarding of financial assistance to voluntary organisations and the use of discretionary spending allows the Committee to further the aims expressed in the Priorities for the District.
- 3.4 Production of this report is a requirement of the 'Priorities for the District' in which the Community Officer is required to produce a formal report to the Area Committee for a minimum of four 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 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 and 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 at Appendix A: Area Committee Budget Spread sheet, which relates to the Area Committee budget balances for the current financial year 2014/15.
- 7.2 The spread sheet also details pre-allocated sums carried forward from the previous financial years 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 Area Committee's 2014/15 Area Grant Budget is **£18,020**.

- 7.4 There are no funds within the Area Committees 2013/14 Area Grant Budget that remain uncommitted. However, there is £4026 available allocated to generic headings.
- 7.5 The current level of unallocated funds within the Area Committee's existing small MoU Budget is **£280.00**.

8. PROJECT/ ACTIVITY/ SCHEME DETAILS

8.1 Rhythms of the World Outreach Programme

Rhythms of the World are requesting £1500 grant funding towards the cost of running their outreach programme. Rhythms of the World unites the local community through the arts, as well as running the annual festival they also run an outreach programme which takes the ethos of the festival out to groups that may not otherwise experience it. The programme would work in partnership with Schools, frail elderly people and disability groups.

The outreach programme would consist of five music and dance workshops with disadvantaged groups. It would also involve local schools bringing them together to create a giant community art piece that will be displayed at the festival.

Volunteers from the Outreach project have contacted 76 groups about the Community Arts project. They have so far received seven positive responses, including Wilshere Dacre School, Early Days Preschool Oughtenhead, Oughtenhead Primary, Strathmore Preschool and Nightingale Day Services. They have also received interest from Hitchin Trefoil Guild, Second Hitchin ladies group, Lime Tree House in Whitwell and the Minsden Care Home.

In recent years an element of the outreach project was delivered to Leonard Cheshire home. Two of the young people who took part in the music workshop became so engaged that they felt confident enough to volunteer on the festival weekend. As wheelchair users, this was something they had never contemplated doing previously, demonstrating how the Arts can break down barriers.

The project has been successful in gaining funding from local County Council Locality Budget funding. They have received £1000 from both the Hitchin South and Hitchin North County Councillors.

The grant report for this project is presented at Appendix B.

Whilst officers are generally supportive of the outreach work which is proposed, they would point members to the RoTW website, which clearly states that;

The Community Outreach Programme and the Rhythms of the World Presents events are funded from the profits of the Rhythms of the World festival – so by purchasing a ticket to the festival, or any other ROTW event, you contribute directly to both of these initiatives

In 2012, the festival cost £290k to put on, ticket sales broadly covered costs, and the organisation ended the year with £42k in unrestricted reserves remaining. Its policy is to hold such reserves in order to mitigate impact of bad weather or other loss of income versus expenditure which may occur in subsequent years. However, there does remain an option to increase the price of tickets very slightly in order to create a larger profit for reinvestment in outreach activities, or alternatively secure a larger number of sponsors for the event. Similarly, the sale of tickets to the festival is on the basis that

they provide an income from which Outreach activities are funded, which unless there is sufficient surplus gained they clearly cannot.

8.2 **Box Cleva**

Box Cleva require £1500 funding in order to continue the project Wayne Armstrong Gym in Hitchin. Box Cleva aims to reduce anti-social behaviour by engaging young people in structured, positive activity that instils self-discipline and respect for themselves and others. It is run by senior fire-fighters, who are also local boxing club members.

The activity is NON contact. The young people attending will be referred by agencies if they are at risk of offending, exclusion from school or are exhibiting challenging behaviour both in the home and community.

Over 40 weeks they build relationships with the tutors and the whole experience is based around health, fitness, respect and positive role models.

The young people will be undertaking fitness exercise and games in order to promote active lifestyles and healthy eating.

Up to 20 young people aged 7 – 15 years will be selected via the referral process. The aims are to reduce offending, prevent offending and anti-social behaviour, install respect and the Fire fighter / boxer's ethos in the young people, many of whom do not have a positive male role model in their lives.

It is intended that over the 40 weeks the engagement will see a real change in behaviours of the young people and that a club will be formed to continue the project after the 40 weeks. The organisation also run a project based in Letchworth for which the Letchworth Area Committee grant funded £1500 at their last meeting in December 2014.

The grant report for this project is presented at Appendix C.

8.3 **Walsworth Community Centre**

Walsworth Ward Councillors wish to provide £400 from their discretionary ward budget to Walsworth Community Centre towards the cost of decoration to the front exterior of the building. This grant was discussed at the meeting of the Hitchin Area Committee in December 2014 however the decision was deferred as the Committee was inquorate.

Members are asked to consider, discuss and agree to award this grant *in principle*, since there is a report being prepared for Cabinet shortly in regard to future plans for this and other Community Centres in regard to Lease renewals, future sustainability etc.

The grant report for this project is presented at Appendix D.

8.4 **Drinking Water fountains for Bancroft, King George's and Ransom's Recreation Grounds**

Bearton Ward members have expressed a wish to allocate £1,083 funding currently allocated to 'Community Projects' from the Bearton Ward budget. The funds were intended to be used to cover the cost of purchasing and installing one drinking water fountain in each park.

However, in discussion with relevant officers, there are a number of additional factors which need to be considered before such works could progress, if indeed their need or provision could be justified. Ongoing maintenance costs, including repair in event of

vandalism, metered cost of additional water, routine cleaning, legionella safety checks, etc which could incur significant additional ongoing revenue costs. The use of area committee grant funding is not appropriate to such a scheme, as this would effectively constitute a contractual commitment to the authority over a much longer term.

The Area Committee is therefore advised that they could either ask officers to provide a short report outlining the various implications of such provision to a future meeting, or alternatively request relevant service officers include the proposals in the next round of corporate budget planning, or that they are considered in the programme of ongoing capital works/improvements as they are come forward for each individual park.

8.5 Sunday Bus Service

Local County Councillors have discussed the possibility of running a pilot Sunday bus service to/from the Westmill estate and St Michaels/Ninesprings.

Given the buoyancy of Sunday trading/activity in the town it was felt worth trying to see if one vehicle operating from about 0930 -1730 could be a commercial proposition. The intention would be to run it for about six months and if there was sufficient usage a commercial operator could then take over. If not then at least it was worth a try. County Councillors David Barnard, Judi Billing and Derrick Ashley have all agreed to contribute £1500 from their county council locality budgets and the Hitchin Area Committee are now being asked to contribute £1500 towards the approximate £6k gross cost of the pilot.

Officers would advise members that in considering an award of this nature, they should be mindful that were they to provide such a grant, it would be against NHDC agreed policy. The Terms of Reference of Area Committees state that Area Committees are to "allocate discretionary and devolved budgets within the terms determined by Council".

A decision was taken during the budget setting process a number of years ago for NHDC to cease providing bus subsidy on the basis that Herts County Council as statutory provider would continue to do so.

8.6 Update on grant funding to Hitchin Quaker Friends Meeting House

In June 2014 the Hitchin Committee agreed to provide £3000 grant funding towards building works to repair and refurbish two stretches of boundary walls to the Quaker Meeting House grounds. The works involved re-pointing and replacement of spalled bricks and settlement crack which required specialist contractors experienced in this work. This work has now been completed although it took longer than originally anticipated. Mr Bob Harrold, Convenor of Premises Committee of Hitchin Quaker Meeting asked to place on record appreciation for the grant which contributed to the successful completion of the project. A photographic montage of the completed work is presented at Appendix E.

8.7 Update on North Hertfordshire District Council's Green Space Strategy

On the 18th June 2013 the draft Green Space Management Strategy for 2014 – 2019 was reported to Cabinet. The strategy was then circulated to all Area Committees for their comments and formally adopted by Cabinet on the 24th September 2013.

The strategy can be viewed at the following web link:

http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/index/leisure_and_culture/parks_countryside_and_open_spaces.htm

A table outlining an update of the current developments in the Hitchin area is included at Appendix F, this is to provide Councillors the opportunity of identifying any areas of

concern they wish to be included in a fuller paper which can be brought to the Committee at a later date.

8.8 Highways Matters

It was agreed that a section entitled 'Highways Matters' is included within the Area Grant applications and community update Report for each committee cycle to facilitate debate and enable appropriate feedback on any of the proposed or listed schemes.

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

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 include discretionary grant 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, as a body, 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 2014/15 baseline budget has stayed the same as the previous year.
- 10.2 The former MoU Budget is subject to a 7.1 per cent reduction each year through to financial year 2015/16.
- 10.3 Appendix A provides the detailed budget position for the Committee.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 There are no 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. There are no pertinent risk implications for the Authority associated with any items within this report.

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 Hitchin Area Committee Budget Report 2014/15
- 15.2 Appendix B Rhythms of the World – Grant Report
- 15.3 Appendix C Box Cleva – Grant Report
- 15.4 Appendix D Walsworth Community Centre – Grant Report
- 15.5 Appendix E Photo Montage of the Quaker Meeting House Wall on Bedford Road
- 15.8 Appendix F Update on Green Space Strategy
- 15.9 Appendix G Area Committee Summary Update 2014 - 2015

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17. BACKGROUND PAPERS

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