

TITLE OF REPORT: CHAMPION NEWS & FINANCE REPORT

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF POLICY & 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 to some important community based activities that will be taking place during the next few months.

2 THE 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 LeAYP (Letchworth Action for Young People)

The LEAYP 2 It! event was successfully held in Leys Square on the 29th September. North Herts College provided entertainment with local young musicians enrolled on the performing arts course, as well as promoting all the other courses the College offers. Many local organisations including North Herts Homes, Letchworth Rugby Club and Signing for Babies hosted information stalls. There was a Zumba taster session and the Letchworth Roller-Hockey members skated into the town centre as part of a fund raising event they were holding.

It is planned to repeat the event next year possibly as part of the Letchworth Festival Fortnight.

3.2 Town Centre Partnership

Due to the planned filming in the Town Centre running up to Christmas the planned Christmas events have been rescheduled with the Christmas Lights switch on event now taking place on Saturday 1st December. The town's Christmas Trees will be put into place on 28/29th November, around filming commitments in and approaching the Broadway Gardens earlier that week.

The Community Development Officer provided assistance with finding volunteers to help with stewarding this event and the volunteers who helped with the Olympic Torch event were contacted as many of them had replied with offers to help at future events in the Town Centre.

The Partnership are continuing to work on the plan to create a Business Improvement District (BID) for Letchworth. They are in the process of developing a business plan and consulting with local businesses to provide information on how a BID will effect them, gauge opinions and answer any questions. The process then needs to move to a formal ballot, resourced and conducted by NHDC, the original intention being to have this in place for the new financial year from April 2013. However, it may be that further preparation is required, and in that instance, the ballot and billing can be carried out 'in year'.

3.3 Howard Park & Gardens

The water feature has been closed down for the winter period and repairs to the disabled toilet have been ordered following a recent arson attack.

In partnership with Groundwork Hertfordshire a friends of group will shortly be formed to assist in the delivery of the community action plans which form part of the Heritage Lottery Bid objectives. The group have held an initial meeting and the next one is scheduled for December 2012. One of the first tasks will be to assist in the creation of a new community garden by the entrance to Mrs Elizabeth Howard Memorial Hall.

On Friday 26th October a work experience day was held in partnership with North Herts College to provide students with experience in working in a horticultural environment.

3.4 Box Cleva

The Box Cleva project has been successfully run in other areas in Hertfordshire. It is aimed at 8 to 13 year olds who exhibit challenging behaviour. The project delivers non contact boxing training and promotes; positive role models, discipline, healthy eating and an active lifestyle.

It is proposed to run the project at the Garden City Academy (formally Radburn School), starting in January 2013.

The project will supported by the members of the Community Safety Partnership.

3.5 Sollershott Roundabout

A project team has been set up with officers from both NHDC and the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation and volunteers from the Arch Community Group.

The LGCHF have provided the design services of their in-house Landscape Designer who is liaising with Hertfordshire Highways in order to draft a suitable design for the renovation of the roundabout.

It is envisaged that the design will reflect the historical importance of the roundabout and it's significance as a local landmark.

Funding has become available to cover the cost of the first phase of the project, being the roundabout itself. It is envisaged that the surrounding boarders and planting at the junctions of Broadway, Sollershott East and Spring Road will be addressed at a later date. These were planted with wild flowers earlier in the year which led to many positive comments from local residents.

4. FUNDING DECISIONS TO BE MADE / CONSIDERED

4.1 The Committee is asked to note the budgetary expenditure, balances and carry forwards from the Development Budgets and the Visioning Budgets as detailed in the Spreadsheet outlining the Area Development Budget for 2012/13, attached as Appendix 1.

4.2 Wednesday Drop-In Club

The Wednesday Drop-In Club is applying for £500 grant funding towards the cost of organising the members annual Christmas party and a coach trip to the coast planned for next summer.

The reduction of MOU grant funding over the past few years has resulted in the group having less funds available for other activities. As well as this yearly reduction in the MoU award, the group has additionally suffered from the withdrawal of resources from the Health Authority which used to provide support staff.

Although members of the club contribute financially to take part in such activities, further grant funding would realise a level of subsidy that would make the activities more accessible for all the members.

4.3 Rhapsode

Rhapsode is a voluntary group which has been running regular art based activities for children in Letchworth for some years and received funding from the Area Committee in 2008 & 2009 towards art education projects.

Rhapsode now plan to take over a retail unit on the Wynd to use as a base for their activities. They intend to subsidise their costs by adding a retail element and encourage local groups to use the shop for meetings and events. They will be working in partnership with local schools and other arts & community groups, such as the Digswell Arts Trust, based in the Fenner Building and the Letchworth Festival Committee.

They hope to organise events in and around the Wynd to encourage foot fall generally in that area and if successful this project will help assist other groups and local artists in springboarding them onto future initiatives.

4.4 Royal British Legion – Letchworth Branch

The Letchworth Branch of the Royal British Legion have been awarded £290 as a Fast Track grant. The funding is 50% of the cost of purchasing a new flag which is to be flown at the flag pole by the War Memorial.

The organisation have applied for the remaining funds via County Cllr Keith Emsall's locality budget.

4.5 Highways Matters

Members attention is drawn to Appendix 5 Joint Funded Highways Schemes / Proposals Form which will list and track joint funded Highways schemes or proposals raised by the Committee.

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

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.

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
- 6.3 In addition, the spreadsheet includes the balances relating to allocated Visioning Budgets available within the Letchworth area.

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.
- 7.4 In line with the requirements placed on local authorities following the 2010 Equality Act coming into place, the Council is required to conduct a full equality analysis of the impact of funding being granted, or withdrawn, where that award exceeds £50k for a single project, comprises a significant change in delivery/restructure, or which affects more than two wards. None of the projects proposed in the appendices to this report fulfil these requirements so a separate analysis report is not required.

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 The Committee is asked to note the budgetary expenditure, balances and carry forwards from the Development Budgets and Visioning Budgets as set out in Appendix 1.

Summary of funds currently available to the Committee

Capital Visioning Budget - £6,601

Funds carried forward, (*now transferred to the base budget*) - £2,948

Unallocated 2012/13 Funds - £28,815

- 9.2 That the Committee considers a grant request of £500 from the Wednesday Drop-In Club to subsidise the cost of the Members Christmas Party and a Summer outing.
- 9.3 That the Committee considers a grant request of £1,250 from Rhapsode to increase their activities in the town and develop a community arts location in the Wynd.
- 9.4 That the Committee considers any new Highways proposals that it wishes to joint fund and to forward such schemes on to the respective County Councillor for consideration.
- 9.5 That the Committee endorses the actions taken by the Community Development Officer to promote greater community capacity and well-being for Letchworth Garden City.

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 awarding of financial assistance to voluntary organisations and the use of discretionary spending allows the Committee to further the priorities of the Council.
- 10.4 The allocation of funds will improve the services provided by local organisations and groups that are available and accessed by members of the community.

11. APPENDICES

- 11.1 Appendix 1 - Committee Delegated Budgets 2012/13 Spreadsheet
- 11.2 Appendix 2 - Wednesday Drop-Club - Grant Report Form
- 11.3 Appendix 3 - Rhapsode - Grant Report Form
- 11.4 Appendix 4 - Area Committee Work Programme Summary
- 11.5 Appendix 5 - Joint Funded Highways Schemes / Proposals Form

12. CONTACT OFFICERS

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13.1 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 13.1 Community Governance Reviews – Full Council Meeting 25th February 2010.