

**LETCHWORTH AREA COMMITTEE
11 SEPTEMBER 2013**

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

AGENDA ITEM No.

9

TITLE OF REPORT : CHAMPION NEWS & FINANCE REPORT

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF POLICY & 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 The Committee is asked to note the budgetary expenditure, balances and carry forwards from the Development Budget and Visioning Budget as set out in Appendix 1.
- 2.2 That the Committee considers grant funding of £250 to the Letchworth Knit & Natter Group towards the start up costs of this new group.
- 2.3 That the Committee endorses the actions taken by the Community Development Officer to promote greater community capacity and well-being for Letchworth Garden City.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To ensure the Committee is 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 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 1 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 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 Area Committee's 2013/14 Area Grant Budget is **£19,032**
- 7.4 The current level of unallocated funds within the Area Committee's 2012/13 Area Grant Budget is **£4,494**
- 7.5 The current level of unallocated funds within the Area Committee's MoU Budget is **£1,680**
- 7.6 The current level of unallocated funds within the Area Committee's Capital Visioning Grant Budget is **£6,601**

8. PROJECT/ ACTIVITY/ SCHEME DETAILS

8.1 Letchworth Knit & Natter Group

The Knit and Natter group started 6 months with the aim of giving local residents in the town somewhere where they could come together to improve their knitting and crochet skills, swap ideas, help teach others and socialise. They started with 5 members and in the past few months have attracted a further 7 new members.

For three of the members, the knitting group is the only time that they get to leave their home and spend time with other people. Four of the current members are also registered blind or partially sighted. In the six months that they have been running they have also raised awareness of knitting and crochet and sharing skills through helping with the Yarn Bomb of the 'Paradise Is' statue in Letchworth Garden City. People were thrilled to see the statue transformed and the project appeared in the Comet, Advertiser and on local radio to promote the community spirit of Letchworth Garden City.

The group is continually growing and attracting new members each month. They are currently planning a workshop event for adults and children and have been overwhelmed by the public support for the group through the donations of wool.

The items produced are sold to raise money for local charities and the group were recently awarded a certificate of thanks from Guide Dogs for the Blind for their fundraising efforts. It is predicted that in 12 months the group will have enough members to be able to sustain the running of the group by re-investing the income raised back into the Knit and Natter group itself.

£250 grant funding is requested to cover the cost of the following:

Wool, knitting & crocheting supplies for new members/beginners - £80

Design & print of leaflets to promote group to new members (targeting sheltered housing/care homes/community centres etc) £168.00 for 1000 copies delivered

The group are requesting £250 from the Letchworth Area Committee, £250 from the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation and £190 from the Herts County Council's Locality Budget. They estimate an income of £300 in the first 12 months which will be gained from weekly entrance fees and other fund raising activities such as the sale of hand knitted crafts.

8.2 Halloween Event at Howard Park

A family event is being planned by Groundwork Hertfordshire to take place in Howard Park on Thursday 31st October. Planning is in the early stages but it is hoped to publicise the event via local schools and provide Halloween themed activities for Children.

8.3 National Citizenship Service Training Courses

The Community Development Team were approached by the organisation, By Design Group, that had received the Government contract for the 2013 programme of National Citizen Service. Part of the four week programme includes designing, planning and delivering a social action project within their community. The local organiser requested the Community Development Officers for a presentation, to the young people on community projects and getting involved with the local community.

The scheme has proved very worthwhile, with one of the projects being delivered at St Michaels Road underpass, which has been brightened up by a lovely cheerful mural, designed and painted by the young people. Groups are also raising money for local and national charities including The Sanctuary in Hitchin and highlighting the homeless issue by sleeping out. Another group raised money by having a music day in the Market Place in Hitchin.

8.4 **Reynolds Social Club**

The Reynolds Social Club have organised a coach day trip to Southend for up to 31 of their members and other elderly people living in and around the Grange Estate. £480 has been grant funded via the Fast Track grant process towards the cost of Coach Hire. The Grant report for this project is outlined in Appendix 3.

8.5 **Grange Youth Club – Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme**

The Grange Youth Club originally submitted a grant application for £1375 grant funding towards the cost of taking 5 young people on an activity weekend to obtain their silver Duke of Edinburgh award. In order to do this the young people need to complete a residential outward bounds training course at a cost of £295 per head. The young people have managed to raise £100 towards the costs themselves.

The date of the residential course was changed from the end of October to the 6th and 7th September which brings the date that the funding is required to prior to the date of the Area Committee Meeting.

The Community Development Officer contacted both the Hertfordshire County Councils Grange Ward member and the Letchworth Civic Trust to request that they consider match funding the project.

At the time of writing the following applications had been made:

- £500 NHDC Letchworth Area committee (via the Fast Track process).
- £500 Herts County Council Locality Budget
- £375 Letchworth Civic Trust

The Grant Report for this project outlined in Appendix 4.

8.6 **Highways Matters**

8.6.1 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.

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 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 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 1 Letchworth Area Committee Budget Report 2013/14
- 15.2 Appendix 2 Letchworth Knit & Natter Group – Grant Report
- 15.3 Appendix 3 Reynolds Social Club – Grant Report
- 15.4 Appendix 4 Grange Youth Club – Grant Report
- 15.5 Appendix 5 Area Committee Summary Update 2013 - 2014

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17. BACKGROUND PAPERS

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