

TITLE OF REPORT: CHAMPION NEWS AND FINANCE REPORT

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF POLICY & COMMUNITY SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise the Committee of the activities and schemes with which the Community Development Officer has been involved.
- 1.2 To bring to the Committee's attention some important community based activities that will be taking place during the next few months.
- 1.3 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.
- 1.4 To advise the Committee on the current expenditure and balances of the Area Committee delegated budgets.

2. 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 Young People**

It's generally acknowledged that organisations focussing on young people will always be cyclical, reflecting the changes that naturally occur in young people's lives - changes such as moving to 'big' school, or moving out of school altogether and on to a job or further education. Royston Youth Council has also reflected the changes in pressures on school staff: the current Youth Council's attendance plummeted in May, and no further meetings have been held since then.

Fortuitously, however, a chance conversation between a young man in the street and a Councillor may well lead to the Youth Council being revived, and more representative. The young man stated that 'no-one ever listens to us', and the Councillor challenged that remark. It is hoped that an informal meeting will soon be set up in the Burns Road area to investigate the needs and aspirations of young people in that area.

3.2 Other work

- 3.2.1 The CDO assisted with production of the application pack for the 2011-12 round of the Rural Grants Fund. The deadline for returned applications has been moved to October 28th giving Parishes and rural groups an extra month to develop their schemes.

The CDO has also handled several subsequent enquiries about the Rural Grants Fund.

3.2.2 The CDO attended the Royston Kite Festival on August 7th.

3.2.3 The CDO has assisted Reed Parish Council with a revision to their Playground Challenge application to reflect changed circumstances, in particular the views of the residents as expressed in their Parish Plan questionnaire.

In addition Officers are assisting the Parish Council in making a call on Planning funds collected via Unilateral Undertakings payments from past developments in the area, and County Councillor Hunter has also pledged £1,000 from his Locality Budget towards the Playground.

3.2.4 The CDO attended a meeting of the Royston First Advisory Council on August 26th.

3.2.5 A letter has been received from Royston Town Council, thanking the Committee for the grant in support of Museum Wardens.

3.2.6 A Members' Surgery took place on 30th July in Angel pavement, at which nine members of the public raised twelve issues. Of these, six were dealt with within two weeks by Members and / or the CDO. Three issues related to trees, two to disability access issues, and one to Housing. The remainder were each of one item: that of Antisocial Behaviour was referred to the Council's ASB Officer, Steve Gibbs.

3.2.7 The CDO has modified the Grants Database to more readily enable the payment of Section 106 and Unilateral Undertaking payments to relevant schemes.

3.2.8 The CDO met with Members and a Highways design team in Old North Road to discuss possible improvements to parking arrangements. The CDO is liaising with other Officers at NHDC to enable a range of options to be considered.

3.2.9 The CDO visited the junction of Coombelands and Melbourn Road following a complaint from a resident about ball games being played there.

3.3 **Fish Hill Square, Royston - Enhancement Update**

Maylim started working on site at the beginning of July and are progressing well in line with their programme. The major excavation work within the square created a large hole for an attenuation tank formed from stacked crates. North Herts archaeologist was on site to record any artefacts of historical significance. The most important find was a medieval post hole with other discoveries dating back to the 19th and 20th centuries.

Maylim are ensuring that pedestrian access is available to businesses and residences during the works and that temporary servicing arrangements are put in place.

Work is also progressing on the fabrication of the sculpture. This is due to be installed at the end of the contract in early October. The trees for the square are anticipated to be planted in November.

Consultation on the proposed Traffic Regulation Orders associated with the project should be underway at the time of the committee meeting. The proposed TROs will include:

- extending the existing restricted zone from the High Street and John Street to Fish Hill Square,
- introducing parking restrictions in the Square and along the north eastern side of Market Hill, and

- introducing additional parking spaces at the south western side of Fish Hill near the old cattle market site.

An event is being planned for mid November once all the works are completed to mark the opening of the new enhanced square.

3.4 **Royston Town Centre Maintenance**

A contract has been let to repaint the street furniture in Royston town centre, including the new feeder pillars at Angel Pavement. The works should take four weeks and should be completed by end of September, dependent on the weather.

The feeder pillars at the end of Angel Pavement were connected up late in July and are in use by Market Traders: the electricity consumed will be paid for by the Town Council.

3.5 **Highways Work Programme**

The JMP Highways Work Programme for Royston & District is attached as Appendix G.

3.6 **Proposed Community Halls Strategy**

At their last meeting Members asked a group of questions about the Strategy, and tasked the CDO with supplying responses. The questions are re-stated below, together with responses.

How much did the report cost?

The document was been created through a combination of officer time and an externally sourced condition survey of all of the centres and halls in the district. Officer time was not specifically recorded as work was undertaken as part of normal day to day activities. Undertaking the district wide condition survey was approved by the Portfolio Holder with funding approved from the 2009/10 strategic priorities fund. The consultancy employed submitted a fixed fee circa £7,500.00. Given that there were 43 sites to survey this equated to approximately £175.00 / site which was considered to be excellent value for money and will better inform future spending or improvement works too..

Why was uplift was required?

It was considered important to reflect the contribution to the overall community facility service provision in the urban areas made by facilities not directly or indirectly owned or operated by the Council. These facilities, such a churches, scout huts, schools, public houses etc., have a considerable amount of capacity for hire by the public and indeed are well used by local communities. A survey conducted of these facilities showed that they provide 'home' to a wide and diverse range of clubs and groups who use them on a regular basis, in addition to hiring them for private functions such as parties and wedding receptions. In an attempt to scope the full extent of the community facility service provision across the District therefore a judgement was made, in the light of the results of the survey, that an uplift on the 'recognised' community hall provision of 40% to allow for this contribution would be appropriate.

Did the figures quoted take into account any expansion required to fit the needs of the local community? and did the figures take into account any increase in the local population?

The document takes into account the current forecasts in population growth to 2031 and the extent to which current community hall provision may need to be considered in the light of those forecasts to that date.

It would be good to see the refurbishment of Coombes Community Centre completed (it still lacks storage space).

Historically the Council has always had maintenance obligations under the terms of the lease, and of course as a responsible landlord over our community centres, and dealt with problems as they've arisen; the centres' management committees have sought necessary modifications to the buildings to deal with changes in their business environment, and we assume that would continue. In the current difficult financial climate, however, this is difficult to achieve for both the Council and the centres' own management committees.

This strategy, if adopted by Council, will enable the Council to justify, on the basis of the measurements made in the survey, the condition surveys and a prioritisation table drawn from that information, the more precise targeting of Section 106 Community Hall contributions from developers who may seek to undertake new housing projects in Royston; those contributions could be used for the improvement of the town's community halls, such as Coombes C.C.

When does the lease of the Coombes Community Centre expire?

September 9th, 2013.

4. FUNDING DECISIONS TO BE MADE / CONSIDERED

- 4.1 A spreadsheet showing the detailed spend to date of the Area Committee Development budget is enclosed as Appendix A.
- 4.2 A grant application has been received from Royston Heath Archery Club for the establishment of an archery range, and is attached as Appendix B.
- 4.3 A grant application has been received from Royston Town Council for a re-print of Royston Town trail , and is attached as Appendix C.
- 4.4 A grant application has been received from NHDC Internal Budgetary Support for North Herts. Village of the Year Competition, and is attached as Appendix D.
- 4.5 A grant application has been received from Hertfordshire Highways Partnership for A10 gateway feature, and is attached as Appendix E.
- 4.6 A grant application has been received from Hertfordshire Highways Partnership for Old North Road parking , and is attached as Appendix F.

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 2011/12.
- 6.2 The spreadsheet also details the pre-allocations carried forward from the previous financial year 2010/11 to the current financial year 2011/12.

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.

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 the funding proposals for Area Committee Discretionary Development Funds.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 That the Committee endorses the actions taken by the Community Development Officer to promote greater community capacity and well-being.
- 9.2 That the Committee considers making a grant award of £1,000 to Royston Heath Archery Club for the establishment of an archery range.
- 9.3 That the Committee considers making a grant award of £263 to Royston Town Council for the re-print of Royston Town trail.

- 9.4 That the Committee considers making a grant award of £50 to NHDC Internal Budgetary Support for North Herts. Village of the Year Competition.
- 9.5 That the Committee considers making a grant award of £500 to Hertfordshire Highways Partnership for the design costs of the A10 gateway feature.
- 9.6 That the Committee considers making a grant award of £500 to Hertfordshire Highways Partnership for for the design costs of the Old North Road parking project.

10. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 10.1 To ensure that the Committee are kept informed of the work of the Community Development Officer.

11. CONTACT OFFICER

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12. APPENDICES

- 12.1 Appendix A – Finance spreadsheet.
- 12.2 Appendix B - Grant Form, Royston Heath Archery Club
- 12.3 Appendix C - Grant Form, Royston Town Council
- 12.4 Appendix D - Grant Form, NHDC Internal Budgetary Support
- 12.5 Appendix E - Grant Form, Hertfordshire Highways Partnership
- 12.6 Appendix F - Grant Form, Hertfordshire Highways Partnership
- 12.7 Appendix G – List of Hertfordshire Highways current projects.