

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 of the activities and schemes with which the Community 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 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. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to note the activities and schemes with which the Community Officer has been involved.
- 2.2 The Committee is asked to note the budgetary expenditure, balances and carry forwards within the Area Committee Development Budget Spreadsheet attached as Appendix 1.
- 2.3 The Committee is asked to confirm support or otherwise for the release of Memorandum of Understanding Grants **for one year only** to the four Royston based groups that currently benefit namely; Royston Town Twinning (£170), Royston Cave (£750), Royston Volunteer Bureau (£2,750) and Royston Community Transport (£2,200). On confirmation from Members, the Royston CO will arrange for the release of funds during June 2015.
- 2.4 The Committee considers a Grant Award of £1,500 to Royston Open Secrets to assist with the costs for purchasing event banners and event signage as well as marquee hire and other equipment costs including extension cables.
- 2.5 The Committee considers a Grant Award of £1,500 to Creative Royston to assist with the production and distribution costs of the Festival Programme and also for insurance and event licence costs.

- 2.6 That the Committee notes and agrees the deduction of £900 from the area committee's budget to enable sufficient budget to fund districtwide organisations for financial year 2015 only (see para 7.5) pending the outcome of the authority's Grants review.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To ensure that the Committee are 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 in 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 and Priorities of the Council.

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 the 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. ISSUES

- 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 2015/16
- 7.2 The spreadsheet also details pre-allocated sums carried forward from the previous financial year 2014/15 including balances and past expenditure relating to the allocated and un-allocated budgets available to the Committee.
- 7.3 The current level of unallocated funds within the Committee's Development Budget is **£26,299.**

- 7.4 This report has been produced to keep Members informed of the work of the Community Officer for the Royston & District Area.
- 7.5 Members should note that one of the recommendations arising from the Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish Group on the Council's grant making process (July 2013) was that a 'district wide pot' should be established in order to enable payments to be made to applicants whose project covered the whole of North Herts, without need to present and apply to each of the Council's five area committees; on further consideration, the Task and Finish Group considered, in their report back to Cabinet in July 2013, that achieving such a pot by removing money from area committees may not be the most appropriate, but that the Head of Policy and Community Services be tasked with considering this issue as part of the grants review.

In the process of the overall grants policy review to date, the Head of Policy and Community Service has highlighted not only that multiple applications to area committees is resource intensive for both applicant and Council officers/administrative costs but nor does it accord with the Council's Constitution in regard to area committees, which states at 9.8.2 community (h);

- (h) To establish and maintain relationships with outside bodies/voluntary organisations operating specifically within the area including, where appropriate, the provision of discretionary grant aid/financial support etc. **but excluding grants for district-wide activities (as determined by the Head of Policy and Community Services).**

It has therefore been agreed in discussion with the Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement and Rural Affairs that a small budget of £6.1k be established **for the financial year 2015 only**, by reducing each area committee grant by a proportionate amount toward this districtwide budget. The relevant amounts to be deducted from each area committee budget are as follows;

Area Committee	£
Baldock	700
Hitchin	1,600
Letchworth	1,600
Royston	900
Southern Rural	1,300
Total	£6,100

Awards from the budget will be made under existing delegations, following discussion with the portfolio holder for Community Engagement and Rural Affairs .Applications received will be included within this report to area committees, and the decision notice published thereafter in the Members Information Service.

This is only intended to be an interim measure, as there are no alternative budgets available from which to create a districtwide pot. Once the review of Major MoUs and grant process is completed shortly, then the way in which all districtwide activities are funded can be considered and agreed together.

8. GRANT REQUESTS

8.1 Royston Open Secrets

Grant funding of £1,500 is requested to contribute towards the total cost of £49,637 for putting on the Royston Open Secrets event at Royston Heath Sports & Social Club on Sunday 7th June 2015. Funding will be used to assist with the costs for purchasing event banners and event signage as well as marquee hire and other equipment costs including extension cables.

8.2 Creative Royston

Grant funding of £1500 is requested to contribute towards the total cost of £12946 for running the Royston Arts Festival fortnight in September 2015. The funding will be used to assist with the production and distribution costs of the Festival programme to 16,500 households and also for insurance and event licence costs.

8.3 Members are asked to note the funding applications currently in the pipeline but not yet ready for funding consideration as detailed in the table below. Members may wish to allocate funding to these projects for the 2015/16 financial year and reports will be produced to future meetings of the Committee..

Project
Funding support to Royston Town Council to assist with a Community Art Project at Coombes Hole.
Funding support to Royston Tennis Club to assist with the purchase of a storage unit for the club.
Funding Support re Rural Schools – Ceramics & Pottery Project – Possible sessions with Reed, Barley & Therfield Shools.

9. PROJECT/ACTIVITY/SCHEME DETAILS

9.1 Royston BMX Track

The Community Officer (CO) continues to work with Royston BMX group to secure funding for a new pavilion at the BMX track. The pavilion will be used for the storage of equipment as well as a providing an office for use on event days.

Since the March meeting, the group has now secured the final funding required for the pavilion project, with £10k being allocated from S106 monies. Royston BMX have now placed a provisional order with the company for building the pavilion.

9.2 Road Naming in Royston

The Road linking Market Hill and Fish Hill has now been formally opened and the name plates for Market link have now been installed.

9.3 Finger Post Maintenance in Royston

The Royston CO has identified funding within the North Herts District Council's Town Centre Maintenance budget pot for addressing the 'finger post', directing public to local places of interest, project.

The contractors Marshals have been contracted for the works and these will be carried out during May 2015.

9.4 **Town Centre Street Furniture Maintenance Project**

It was reported in the March Report that the street furniture maintenance project would be carried out in conjunction with the finger post works during May /June 2015 with both projects being managed by the contractors Marshals.

The Street Furniture Maintenance has unfortunately been delayed as the cost of the project requires for the works to go out to tender in order to comply with Procurement Rules.

It was envisaged that the Town centre Maintenance Pot held by Planning could be utilised to cover the full cost for the project but this is no longer feasible and additional funding for the project will need to be found from a combination of Royston Area Committee funding, Herts County Council Locality Funding, Hertfordshire Highways funding and possibly support from Royston First.

9.5 **Barkway 10k**

The Royston CO is assisting the Barkway Parish Council with their plans for a Barkway 10k run. The Royston CO has met with the organisers and has advised them on the paperwork and planning that is required.

The event was due to be held on Sunday 10th May but due to the degree of planning required the organisers have deferred to later in the year with the race now likely to take place in November.

As this is a new event for the district, the Royston CO will provide hands on support to the organisers both with the planning and the running of the event.

9.6 **Royston 3k Summer Fun Run**

The Royston CO has supported colleagues in Active Communities on the first ever Royston 3k Summer Fun Run. At the time of writing this report 60 local children had registered for the race. A verbal update on the race will be tabled at the June Committee meeting.

9.7 **Coombes Hole Community Art Project**

The Royston CO is liaising with the Royston Town Council on a Community Art Project for the Coombes Hole Underpass. Before the project can commence, it is necessary to seek the appropriate permissions from all relevant parties including Hertfordshire County Council, North Herts District Council and Network Rail. It will also be necessary to ascertain who is responsible for the maintenance of the artwork once it has been commissioned.

9.8 **Highways Matters**

It is proposed that a section entitled 'Highways Matters' is included within the Area Champion's 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. This is to ensure that communication remains effective following the demise of the previous Joint Member Panel for each district.

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.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 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 support. However, this does not include grants for district wide activities.
- 10.2 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.
- 10.3 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.
- 10.4 The Committee has delegated powers to administer funds from the budgets described, provided the expenditure is in accord with agreed Council policy..

11. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 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 2015/16.
- 11.2 The spreadsheet also details the pre-allocations carried forward from the previous financial year 2014/15 to the current financial year 2015/16.
- 11.3 In the past few years there has been no inflationary allowance to the Area Committee Budgets and the 2015/16 baseline budget has stayed the same as the previous year.

12. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 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.

13. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 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.
- 13.2 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.
- 13.3 The projects which comprise the Community 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.

14. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1 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.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 There are no pertinent Human Resource implications associated with any items within this report.

16. APPENDICES

- 16.1 Appendix 1 – Area Committee Development Budget Spreadsheet 2015/16.
- 16.2 Appendix 2 – Area Committee Grant Form – Royston Open Secrets
- 16.3 Appendix 3 – Area Committee Grant Form – Creative Royston

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18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

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