

*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT	<p style="text-align: center;">AGENDA ITEM No.</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">7</p>
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TITLE: CHAMPION NEWS AND FINANCE REPORT

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF POLICY, PARTNERSHIPS & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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 some important community based activities that will be taking place during the next few months.

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 Rural Grants Fund (RGF) incorporating Community Building Refurbishment Fund, Playgrounds Fund, Environment Improvements Fund & Parish Amenity Capital Improvement Fund (PACIF) 2010/11

- 3.1.1 The 2010/11 round of the RGF has now been formally launched to support rural community projects with the deadline for all applications of 30th September 2010. As is custom and practice, full application packs will be available to be downloaded from the Council’s website www.north-herts.gov.uk and then by entering ‘Parish Focused Grants’ in to the Search box.

The lead officer for all RGF applications is the Council’s Community Development Officer - Southern Rural, Garry Gover, email garry.gover@north-herts.gov.uk or direct dial no. 01462 474674.

The new fund supports grants under the following funding headings: ‘Community Building Refurbishment Fund’ (formerly known as Parish Challenge), ‘Playgrounds’ (formerly Parish Playgrounds) & ‘Environmental Improvements Fund’ (formerly Parish

Enhancement & Cleansing Fund). The Parish Amenity Capital Improvement Fund remains under the same heading. All applications support the rural elements of the Council's priorities of 'Sustainable Developments' & 'Green Issues'.

The publicity of these awards will be maximised through the media and Outlook.

This year's round offers the additional £250,000 PACIF capital funding recently approved by Cabinet.

The lead officer for all PACIF applications is the Council's Community Facilities Manager Peter Underwood, email peter.underwood@north-herts.gov.uk or direct dial mobile no. 07789 033212.

3.2 2010 Village of the Year Competition

3.2.1 The 2010 Hertfordshire Village of the Year Competition which includes the Village of the Year North Competition, sponsored by the Council, has now been formally launched by the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) Hertfordshire.

2010 competition timetable:

1 st February:	Entry packages sent out
Thursday 22 nd April:	Poster Competition deadline
Monday 26 th April:	Poster Competition judging
Monday 10 th May:	Preliminary Assessment Meeting
7 th -18 th June:	Judging visits
Friday 18 th June @ 2.00pm:	Final decisions meeting
Thursday 1 st July:	Awards Evening at County Hall
Saturday 24 th July:	Presentation Ceremonies in winning villages

3.2.2 It was agreed that Councillor David Miller will continue as a judge in this year's competition following on from his extensive involvement in the previous year. It is hoped that the 2010/2011 Chairman of the Council, Councillor David Levett will officially present the Village of the Year North awards to the winning village and the main category award winners.

3.2.3 Hertfordshire Community Foundation have formally agreed to provide the primary sponsorship of £2,000 for the next three years from 2010 to ensure the mid term sustainability of the competition, which is now to be known as 'The Hertfordshire Village of the Year Competition'.

The 2010 costs of £500 for sponsoring the Village of the Year North Competition for the second year will be:

- £300 – Southern Rural Area Committee
- £150 – Baldock & District Area Committee split 50/50 of £75 from Arbury Ward & £75 from Weston & Sandon Ward
- £50 – Royston Area Committee

Further to the 18th March 2010 Committee report, the above costs have now also been agreed for 2010 by the respective Ward Members for Arbury and Weston and Sandon, as they had initially only agreed funding for Year 1 (2009).

The costs are proportioned relative to the rural population figures for each respective area committee.

3.3 Great Ashby Youth Provision

- 3.3.1 A meeting took place on 17th May 2010 at Great Ashby Community Centre to discuss the way forward for re-establishing youth provision and a youth club in the community. The Ward Councillor Lee Downie was in attendance and advised that Cllr. Sal Jarvis had also given her full support to the project.

Other agencies represented were Graveley Parish Council, Pro Action, Great Ashby Community Church, Groundworks (Hertfordshire) and the YMCA. It was agreed that the YMCA would provide sessional youth workers, with an anticipated start date of September 2010, subject to the funding being available. A full breakdown of the costs are included in the funding request in the financial section of the report.

3.4 Oughton Children's Centre

- 3.4.1 The Oughton Children's Centre is now providing a regular Southern Rural timetable for its new double decker Playbus visits:-

Monday:

Offley from 9.30 – 10.30am

Lilley from 11.00am – 12.00 Midday

Holwell from 1.00 – 2.00pm

Ickleford from 2.30 – 4.00pm

Friday:

Cockernhoe from 10.00 – 11.00am

Hexton from 11.30am – 12.30pm

Pirton from 1.30 – 2.30pm

Further information is available from Oughton Children's Centre 01462 456329 or email: admin.oughton@hertschildrenscentres.org.uk

The SRCDO continues to provide partnership support on behalf of the Council to the four respective children's centres now covering the Southern Rural areas of the district. The Bluebells and Barleyfields Children's Centres also have their own playbuses and are currently finalising a timetable to provide regular visits to the respective Southern Rural villages covered by the centres.

3.5 2010 Parish & Town Councils Conference – Monday 28th June

- 3.5.1 The 2010 Parish & Town Councils Conference has been scheduled to take place on Monday 28th June 2010 starting at 6.00pm, to be held at the Main Council Offices, Gernon Road, Letchworth Garden City.

Officers are currently seeking advice from Parish & Town Councils and the relevant Portfolio Holders in the preparation of the agenda and the main focus of this year's conference. Further details will be circulated in the near future.

3.6 Revision of Rural Strategy and Parish Charter

- 3.6.1 Officers have been currently undertaking a full revision of the existing Rural Strategy for North Hertfordshire and the Parish Charter in readiness for discussion at the Parish & Town Councils Conference on 28th June 2010.

The SR CDO as the primary rural officer, has been fully engaged in this process to ensure a full overview is included.

3.7 Review of NHDC Grants Criteria

- 3.7.1 Officers have recently undertaken an annual review of the grant-aid criteria administered by Community Development & Community & Cultural Services Teams.

The criteria have taken in to account the changes to the Council's Strategic Priorities and other minor updates.

These have now been uploaded on to the Council's website www.north-herts.gov.uk and can be found by entering 'Community Grants' in to the Search Box, which will then open the relevant webpage for both 'Area Committee Grants' and 'Parish Focused Grants'.

3.8 North Hertfordshire College – Rural Learning Programme

- 3.8.1 The CDO team met with representatives from the North Hertfordshire College (NHC) Learning Co-ordinating Team on 6th April 2010 to offer support in identifying key rural community locations and facilities, to ensure a wider community learning programme is delivered direct to the rural communities.

This is in consideration of the transport deprivation issues constantly facing the rural areas of the district and recent funding secured by NHC to deliver key rural learning programmes.

3.9 Highways Work Programme

- 3.9.1 The Highways Work Programme for Southern Rural is attached as Appendix 2.

- 3.9.2 Members are requested to note the proposals from the recent JMP meeting held on 19th April 2010 regarding the relevant Rural schemes and projects for consideration and inclusion in the 2010/11 JMP Discretionary Budget Programme. This will be covered in greater detail in the financial section of the report.

The relevant minutes of the Panel meeting are also included with the report, as response is to be included in the report to the next JMP on 26th July 2010.

- 3.9.3 The Great Ashby Pedestrian Crossing has now been completed and the Committee is asked to consider the release of the £3,000 matched funding award for the scheme. Hertfordshire Highways advise & confirm that the scheme that has been constructed is exactly what was identified through the feasibility study.

Whilst they were aware that there had been some confusion surrounding the type of crossing being provided and that some people had made the incorrect assumption that the crossing point was to be a zebra, this matter was discussed and clarified prior to implementation.

They also confirm that the proposal put to the JMP, which the Area Committee chose to contribute towards, made no reference to a zebra crossing and the fee estimate for these works made no allowance for this type of facility. The cost of implementing a zebra crossing would be more likely to cost around £30,000 rather than the £6,000 which was approved.

The Committee may want to request from Hertfordshire Highways that a glossary of the types of pedestrian crossing be provided to ensure future clarity on any additional proposed schemes which seek a consideration for matched funding.

3.10 Area Committee Work Programme

- 3.10.1 The proposed Area Committee Work Programme is attached as Appendix 3

The programme details updates of on-going projects and it can itemise any projects proposed for future discussion at Committee.

3.11 Covert Cameras and further diversionary anti fly-tipping enforcement measures

- 3.11.1 In response to the minutes of the Committee's meeting held on 18th March 2010 officers are following up all of the outstanding action points.
- 3.11.2 The Head of Housing & Environmental Health has advised that the Best Value Report regarding the use of Covert Cameras for Envirocrime will be presented to Cabinet in the Autumn of 2010. The preparation of detailed costings and savings regarding the use of Covert Cameras will then be provided to the Committee.
- 3.11.3 Detailed discussions are currently still on-going with officers from Hertfordshire Highways and the County's Countryside Access Officer, to bring an effective way of implementing further diversionary anti fly-tipping measures.

The Committee's consideration will then be sort regarding the placement of the proposed pyramid bollards and the deployment of portable concrete blocks.

- 3.11.4 Legal Services were asked to clarify the legal implications of accident or injury regarding deployment of or collision with the proposed concrete blocks.
- 3.11.5 The Community Development Officer has met with the Corporate Legal Manager to discuss the current position and possible ways to proceed.

- 3.11.6 The detailed discussions referred to at paragraph 3.11.4 above need to be further progressed in order that the Corporate Legal Manager is able to advise on the proposals. This Council has received from Herts County Council an overview of the relevant legislation, and steps that the highways authority might need to take to enable the proposal.

However information has been received from the County Council that is apparently conflicting as to whether these steps are necessary, and discussions need to be concluded to establish a final position. The discussions also need to consider the detail of the proposal and identify who might be responsible for any equipment (i.e. the concrete bollards). These issues need to be determined in order that the legal implications can be accurately advised.

3.12 Ward Surgeries

- 3.12.1 Following initial discussion at Committee meeting on 18th March 2010, members asked the SRCDO liaise with the Chairman of the Hitchin Committee, via the Hitchin CDO, to consider extending the Hitchin Members Surgery to include attendance by Councillors representing the surrounding rural areas.

The Hitchin Area Committee Chairman has advised that Southern Rural Members would be more than welcome at the Hitchin Surgeries and therefore the Committee may wish to consider how it wishes to proceed regarding possible involvement.

- 3.12.2 The current poster promoting the surgeries advises the following:

“North Hertfordshire District Council and Hertfordshire County Council Community Surgeries offer an opportunity for members of the public to come along and discuss any concerns, suggestions or complaints about District, County Council or Herts. Constabulary services or issues”.

Would you wish to see something done differently?

How?

Visit an NHDC Councillor at Hitchin Market Place (If weather is inclement please attend Church House, Church Yard, Hitchin) on the following dates:

Saturday 5th June, 3rd July, 7th August, 4th September, 2nd October, 6th November, 4th December 2010, 8th January, 5th February, 5th March, 2nd April and 7th May 2010.

10.30am until 12 noon

No appointments necessary.

For further information contact: **Nigel Schofield on 01462 474590**”

- 3.12.3 Members should note that the Hitchin Committee's Member Services Officer is the facilitator of the Community Surgeries.

If the Committee are mindful of supporting its attendance at each respective Community Surgery posters will be widely distributed across Southern Rural.

Publicity and promotion support will be requested from Parish Councils, Parish Meetings, Village Hall Committees, Libraries, the Council's Outlook Community Magazine, 'What's On' section of the Council's website.

Each Community Surgery is also widely publicised in the local Comet Newspaper.

3.13 Chairman of the Council's Civic Service

- 3.13.1 The Community Development Officer and other officers attended Councillor Miller's 2009/10 Chairman's Civic Service held in St Mary's Church, Hitchin on Sunday 18th April 2010 where the theme was 'Young people and volunteers serving in the community'.

3.14 Knebworth Youth Club

- 3.14.1 The CDO met with a representative from Trinity Church, Knebworth on 28th April 2010 regarding the current operation of the Knebworth Youth Club with two part-time Sessional Youth Workers. Advice was given in how the club can move forward and remain sustainable for the future.

In discussions with the Council's Children's Services and Young Persons Development Manager it was agreed that no further Council funding should be provided, as previous grant awards from both the Committee and the Council's Youth Development Budget had already provided sustainable funding to the club in 2007.

3.15 Alleyfield Burial Ground – Ickleford

- 3.15.1 Officers attended the formal opening of the Alleyfield Burial Ground in Ickleford which was completed in record time despite over 50 external funding streams declining to grant-aid the project.

It was fully recognised that the substantial grant awards made by the Council to the Burial Ground Trust and smaller local funding awards and donations enabled the unique project to be completed. Ickleford Parish Council and the Burial Ground Trustees have achieved an amazing result against all odds to provide an essential and sustainable need in a truly unique setting.

3.16 Cockernhoe Memorial Hall

- 3.16.1 Officers and invited District Councillors attended the very successful and well attended formal opening of the new Cockernhoe Memorial Hall. The recent project was an extremely successful partnership initiative between the Council, North Hertfordshire Homes, Offley Parish Council and the Memorial Hall Management Committee.

The local Ward Member Councillor Barnard and officers were recognised for their advice and support, as well as the Council grant award of £7,000 from the 2008/09

Parish Challenge Fund. The new hall will provide a sustainable community facility for many decades and is already being well used by the rural community.

3.17 Graveley Cricket Club

- 3.17.1 Officers met with representatives of Graveley Cricket Club on 19th May 2010 to offer advice and support in how the club can move forward in further improving its facilities for the wider benefit of the wider community.

A scheme will now be drawn up as to the best way forward for the club and partnership support and advice will be further provided from North Herts CVS's Small Group Development Worker and Funding Adviser.

4. FINANCE REPORT

4.1 BACKGROUND

- 4.1.1 A spreadsheet detailing the total spends to date of the Area Development Budgets is attached as Appendix 1.
- 4.1.2 The Committee agreed its programme of awards to community organisations on a meeting by meeting basis. All Parish Councils & Parish Meetings, Community & Voluntary Groups and Organisations have been advised on this process.
- 4.1.3 The Committee is asked to note the Area Committee Discretionary Base Budget for 2011/12 is £23,709, but having agreed four Memorandum Of Understandings (MOU) totalling £6,699, the current unallocated budget is £17,010.
- 4.1.4 The Committee is asked to note that the Member Ward Budget for 2010/11 of £700 per Member should be allocated by March 31st 2011, but will need to be allocated by the meeting of 24th March 2011, as this is the last meeting of the Council's fiscal year.
- 4.1.5 Where there are multi member wards, members are advised to consult with their fellow ward Councillors on any forthcoming community grant requests, to try and avoid any potential application conflicts or multiple requests.

5. ISSUES – PROPOSALS FOR 2009-12

Council priorities

- 5.1 All current SLA's & MoU's and subsequent grant awards should support with the North Hertfordshire's district-wide Vision 'making North Hertfordshire a vibrant place in which to live, work and prosper', and the three priorities which are;

Town Centres
Green Issues
Sustainable Development

6.1 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 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.
- 6.2 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.
- 6.3 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.
- 6.4 The Committee has delegated powers to administer funds from the budgets described.
- 6.5 The Members are asked to refer to paragraphs 3.11.4 – 3.11.6 above regarding the further information required in order that Legal Services are able to fully advise on any relevant considerations in relation to diversionary anti fly-tipping enforcement measures.

7. FINANCIAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 In the past few years, given the significant carry forward for Area Committee Development budgets, there has been no inflationary allowance other than for MoU's, and the baseline for 2010/11 was the same as 2009/10.

8. HUMAN RESOURCE AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The local MoUs are managed by the Community Development Officer as part of their regular work programme.
- 8.2 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. There is a strong argument to be made that if the Council did not provide financial support for projects to do the work that they do, then it could, itself, have to meet the needs of such people in other ways.
- 8.3 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 legislation.

9. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS

- 9.1 Consultation with Members has occurred in connection with the allocation of funds for Community Projects.
- 9.2 Consultation with the respective officers and external agencies/groups has taken place with regard to funding proposals for Area Committee Discretionary Development Funds.

10. ISSUES & FUNDING DECISIONS TO BE MADE

- 10.1 Appendix 1 is a spreadsheet which sets out the detailed spend to date of the Area Development Budget.
- 10.2 Appendix 1.1 is a funding application being submitted to this Committee meeting by Ickleford Squash Club for support costs of £1,000 to refurbish two squash courts.
- 10.3 Appendix 1.2 is a funding application being submitted to this Committee meeting by Kings Walden Parish Council for a 'Start Up' Grant to support costs of £1,000 for a new web site.
- 10.4 Appendix 1.3 is a funding request for support costs of £1,000 from the Committee's pre-allocated budget for Youth Provision for the new Great Ashby Youth Club.
- 10.5 Appendix 1.4 is a funding application being submitted to this Committee meeting by Hitchin Society for £500 to support the publicity costs for the 2010 Heritage Open Days.
- 10.6 Members are asked to note the information detailed in Appendix 1 spreadsheet of the report, which relates to the Area Committee budget balances for the current financial year 2010/11. All budgets will need to be allocated by 24th March 2011, as the Committee meeting is the last in the 2010/11 fiscal year where all un-allocated budgets can be allocated, or re-allocated as appropriate.
- 10.7 The spreadsheet also details the pre-allocations carried forward from the previous financial year 2009/10 including the balances and past expenditure relating to the allocated and un-allocated Area Capital Visioning Budgets available to the Committee.
- 10.8 The total budget for the Committee for 2010/11 is £30,709 including a Ward Members budget of £7,000.
- 10.9 The current unallocated discretionary base budget is £17,010. Should Members be mindful of considering the grant application requests from its 2010/11 development budget totalling £2,500, then the remaining unallocated budget would be £14,510.
- 10.10 The current unallocated Members Ward Discretionary Budget (MWDB) is £7,000.

- 10.11 The current Highways Project Budget has an unallocated budget of £700. This has arisen as a result of the £700 underspend having been returned from Hertfordshire County Council.
- 10.12 The Current pre-allocated Highways Issues and further Anti Fly-Tipping Measures budget is £6,371.00.
- 10.13 The current unallocated Capital Visioning Budget is £15,600.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 11.1 The Committee is asked to note the budgetary expenditure, balances and carry forwards from the Ward Development Budgets and Visioning Budgets as set out in Appendix 1.
- 11.2 That the Committee considers proposing any joint funded projects or schemes for inclusion on the 2010/11 JMP Works programme for the SR area, as advised from the minutes of the JMP meeting held on the 19th April 2010 and as advised in Point 3.9.2 of the report, and that these be included in the report to the next JMP on **26th July 2010** for consideration in the 2010/11 Highways Works Programme.
- 11.3 That Committee considers a grant funding request of £1,000 from Ickleford Squash Club.
- 11.4 That Committee considers a grant funding request of £1,000 from Kings Walden Parish Council.
- 11.5 That Committee considers a grant funding request of £1,000 from Great Ashby Youth Club.
- 11.6 That Committee considers a grant funding request of £500 from the Hitchin Society.
- 11.7 That the Committee endorses the actions taken by the Community Development Officer to promote greater community capacity and well being for rural communities.

12. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 12.1 To ensure that the Committee are kept informed of the work of the Community Development Officer.
- 12.2 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.
- 12.3 The allocation of funds will improve the services provided by the local organisations and groups that are available and accessed by various members of the community.

13. APPENDICES

- 13.1 Appendix 1 – Budget expenditure, balances, and carry forwards from the Ward Development Budgets and the allocated Visioning Budgets.
- 13.2 Appendix 1.1 – Grant request of £1,000 – Ickleford Squash Club.
- 13.3 Appendix 1.2 - Grant request of £1,000 – Kings Walden Parish Council.
- 13.4 Appendix 1.3 Grant request of £1,000 – Great Ashby Youth Club.
- 13.5 Appendix 1.4 - Grant request of £500 – Hitchin Society.
- 13.6 Appendix 2 – Highways Work Programme.
- 13.7 Appendix 3 – Area Committee Work Plan.

14. CONTACT OFFICERS

- 14.1 Garry Gover (Community Development Officer – Southern Rural Area)
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- 14.3 Stuart Izzard (Community Development Manager)
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- 14.4 Lois Stewart (Group Accountant – Customer Services)
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- 14.5 Katie White (Corporate Legal Manager and Monitoring Officer)
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15. BACKGROUND PAPERS

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