

| | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| *PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT | AGENDA ITEM No. 7 |
|----------------------------------|--|

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 2010 Village of the Year Competition

The Village of the Year Working Group met at the CPRE Offices in Welwyn on 23rd August 2010 to review the 2010 competition and discuss the way forward and the options for the future of the Village of the Year Competition.

The SRCDO advised the group of the minutes of the 29th July 2010 SRAC meeting and it was a unanimous agreement that instead of the SRCDO contacting all North Herts Parish Councils (PCs) and Parish Meetings (PMs), it was more appropriate for the CPRE Hertfordshire Executive Administrator to make contact with all the PCs & PMs for their response and views on the 2010 competition, whilst also asking those who had not attended for their comments and why they had taken the decision not to enter the competition.

A survey has been prepared and emailed to all PCs, PMs and primary village contacts requesting responses back to the Executive Administrator for full assessment by the Working Group on Thursday 4th September at 2.00pm at the CPRE Offices, Welwyn.

It is envisaged that the collated responses will then enable the Working Group to appropriately manage and deliver the competition for next year.

3.2 Planning Process for Parish Councils - Informal Seminar

3.2.1 As a follow up from the Annual Parish & Town Councils Conference, Councillor Barnard as Chairman and on behalf of the SRAC arranged an Informal Seminar on the Planning Process for Parish Councils for all Southern Rural Parish Councils and Parish Meetings scheduled to take place prior to this Committee meeting.

The aim of the informal seminar is to clarify certain points within the Planning Process to help Parish Councils to make to appropriate decisions.

The Council's Planning Control and Conservation Manager is to attend the seminar to give guidance and answer questions.

Some of the issues to be covered are:

- What is an admissible planning reason for objections?
- How can a Parish Council tell NHDC their opinion?
- How to interact effectively with your Councillors
- How to contact NHDC Officers
- How does the revised NHDC Constitution change what Parish Councils can do?

For further information the Council's Planning Control and Conservation Manager can be contacted on 01462 474613 or email: mary.caldwell@north-herts.gov.uk

A reminder letter was sent out on 3rd September 2010 to all Southern Rural Parish Councils and Parish Meetings to ensure attendance at the event.

3.3 2010/11 Rural Grants Fund

3.3.1 A reminder letter was sent out on 2nd September 2010 to all North Herts Parish Councils & Parish Meetings to highlight the deadline for all applications being Friday 1st October at 5.00pm.

The lead officers for the Community Building Refurbishment Fund, Playgrounds Fund, Environmental Improvements Fund and the Parish Amenity Capital Improvements Fund have been offering on-going support and site visits in providing help and support in readiness for all applications being submitted.

3.4 Graveley Parish Review

- 3.4.1 Community Development Officers have been providing help and support to the Council's Democratic Services Manager in undertaking the Graveley Parish Review, which was requested to be undertaken by Graveley Parish Council.

Gt Ashby (North Herts) Residents now outnumber Graveley Villagers by approximately 10 to 1. It is felt that a small Parish Council set up to deal with the various problems arising in the rural village of Graveley may no longer be suitable to address the problems arising in the new suburban area of Great Ashby.

Two separate communities have developed within the Parish of Graveley. One centred on Graveley Village and the other on Great Ashby. Because of this, Graveley Parish Council has asked North Herts District Council to undertake a review of the Parish and consider splitting Graveley Parish into two, creating a Parish for the Graveley Village area and a Parish for the Great Ashby area. Another option would be to consider de-parishing Great Ashby, which would make it similar to the towns within the North Herts District.

The Council needs to know the views of the residents, local organisations and groups and perhaps some possible alternative arrangements, before any decisions can be made.

A survey has been prepared with support from Graveley Parish Council and Great Ashby Community Group in order to give as many people the opportunity to comment.

Additional information about what parishes do is available from the website of the National Association of Local Councils. For further information please contact the Council's Democratic Services Manager David Miley on 01462 474208 or e-mail david.miley@north-herts.gov.uk

Two Parish Review Consultation sessions to answer any questions are scheduled to be held on:

- Monday 20th September 2010 at Great Ashby Community Centre
- Tuesday 28th September 2010 at Graveley Village Hall

- 3.4.2 The table below outlines the current proposed timetable for the Council to undertake the Community Governance Review of the Governance Arrangements for the Parish of Graveley

Timetable

| Action | Start Date | Completion date | Outline of action |
|--|------------------|------------------|---|
| Publish Terms of Reference (TOR) | 12 March 2010 | 12 March 2010 | District Council publishes TOR and notifies stakeholders, clearly defining the nature and extent of the Review |
| Introductory stage – submissions are invited | 10 September | 30 September | Views on appropriate arrangements sought from the public and relevant organisations via mailings and public meetings. |
| Draft Proposals to be considered and agreed by Council | 11 November | 11 November | Council agrees draft proposals for public consultation |
| Draft Proposals are published | 12 November | 17 December | District Council publishes Draft Proposals and invites comment. This is the main consultation period |
| Final Proposals are prepared | 18 December | 31 January 2011 | Results of consultation considered and Final Recommendations prepared |
| Final Proposals considered and agreed by Council | 10 February 2011 | 10 February 2011 | Council agrees the extent to which the recommendations should be implemented |
| Final Proposals are published | 11 February 2011 | | |
| Order made (if needed) | | | Council publishes the Reorganisation Order |
| | | | |

3.4.3 COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEWS

Minute 80 of the Full Council Meeting held on 25th February 2010 stated:

The Portfolio Holder for Policy and Green Issues presented a report of the Chief Executive seeking a direction on the requirement under the Local Government and Health Act 2007 to undertake Community Governance Reviews, and to respond to a request received from Graveley Parish Council to undertake such a review.

3.5 Scrutiny Task & Finish Group – Review of Teenagers Services

- 3.5.1 Officers attended a meeting of the Scrutiny Task & Finish Group held on 15th July 2010 in undertaking a Review of Services for Young people throughout the district.

Representatives from Groundworks Hertfordshire and Pro-Action who work in partnership with the Council to provide advice, help and support also attended to provide their input to the review with regard to services and activities in rural areas of the district.

It is anticipated that a final report will be presented to Cabinet on 7th December 2010.

3.6 Diversionary and Additional Anti Fly-tipping Measures

- 3.6.1 Further to the presentation by the Council's Service Manager (Waste Services) to Committee at its meeting held on 29th July 2010, Councillor Barnard, on behalf of the Committee, requested a separate report to be presented to the Committee meeting on indicative costings for Diversionary and Additional Anti Fly-tipping Measures.

In response to this request, a meeting took place on Tuesday 31st August 2010 with the Council's Licensing and Enforcement Manager, Head of Housing and Public Protection, Service Manager (Waste Services), Communications Manager, Community Development Manager and the Southern Rural Community Development Officer to discuss all the points of concern raised by Councillor Barnard.

As a result, the Council's Head of Housing and Public Protection agreed to arrange a meeting with Cllr. Lovewell, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Environmental Health and Cllr. Barnard Chairman of Southern Rural Area Committee and other officers to discuss the various matters/issues raised. At the time of writing the report, the meeting was being arranged and a verbal update will be given at the Committee meeting.

3.7 North Hertfordshire Partnership Annual Community Conference - 'BIG SOCIETY IN A VIBRANT PLACE'

- 3.7.1 The Annual Community Conference will take place on behalf of the North Hertfordshire Partnership Monday 11th October 2010 starting at 6.00pm (light refreshments from 5.30pm). The event will be held in the Spirella Building, Bridge Road, Letchworth, SG6 4ET which is close to Letchworth Railway Station.

The theme of the conference is '**The Big Society and the role of the Voluntary Sector in a time of financial constraints**'.

Elizabeth Chamberlain from the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) and Seb Elsworth from the Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations (ACEVO) have agreed to be the keynote speakers. They will be giving their organisations' perspective on the latest initiatives.

There will be an opportunity for group discussions in the second half of the evening.

More than 120 people attended the conferences in 2008 and 2009 so all invitations were sent out in early September 2010 to ensure high attendance once again for the 2010 Conference. All invitees have been asked to respond by **30th September 2010** at the very latest as spaces are limited. An agenda and information pack will be available at the venue upon arrival. The event is free of charge.

The Council sees this Annual Community Conference as an opportunity to showcase the work of the local voluntary and community sector in North Hertfordshire. There will also be displays from other organisations to showcase their respective works and successes.

The North Hertfordshire Partnership is the Local Strategic Partnership for the district. It brings together the public, private, voluntary and community sectors to improve our quality of life. The partnership's annual report will be available at the event.

- 3.7.2 For more information please visit www.northhertspartnership.org.uk or contact the Council's Policy Officers: Reuben Ayavoo (01462 474212) or email reuben.ayavoo@north-herts.gov.uk, Laura Lack (01462 474309) or email laura.lack@north-herts.gov.uk, or Jim Brown, Policy and Scrutiny Manager (01462 474835) or email jim.brown@north-herts.gov.uk.

3.8 Ickleford Squash Club – Formal re-opening of 2 squash courts

- 3.8.1 Following the Committee's recent grant award of £1,000 to Ickleford Squash Club in support of the refurbishment of the two squash courts, the club will be holding an formal re-opening event on Friday 15th October 2010 @ 7.00pm and light refreshments will be provided.

All Southern Rural Members have been formally invited, as well as the 2010/11 Chairman of the Council, the Leader of the Council and the relevant Portfolio Holders and senior officers.

The Council's Communications Manager has been advised of the event to ensure maximum media publicity for the event.

The full address details for the re-opening event is: Ickleford Sports and Recreation Club, Chambers Lane, Ickleford, Hitchin, Hertfordshire SG5 3YA.

3.9 Highways Matters – Great Ashby Pedestrian Crossing

- 3.9.1 Following the Committee's request to JMP for consideration of additional signage to be placed at the recently installed Pedestrian Crossing, Whitehorse Lane, Great Ashby and consideration of an additional Pedestrian Crossing in Great Ashby Way, Great Ashby, a site meeting took place on Monday 6th September 2010. Councillors Sal Jarvis and David Barnard offered their apologies as they were unable to attend.
- 3.9.2 The Chesfield Ward Member Councillor Downie, the SR CDO and the Lead Assistant District Manager - North Herts for Hertfordshire Highways discussed various options for consideration:

These included:

- Setting out a draft brief for a feasibility study looking at improving awareness of the pedestrian crossing points on Great Ashby Way. Once the scope of the feasibility study has been agreed, this will be passed to the Hertfordshire Highways Design Team to obtain a fee estimate, which will then be presented to the JMP for consideration as a potential scheme for 2011/12.
- The new uncontrolled crossing point installed on Whitehorse Lane was discussed and it was explained that it would not be possible to install signs in advance of the crossing to make approaching vehicle's aware. This is due to legal reason surrounding the placing of signs, legislation dictates that these signs can only be provided in advance of a controlled crossing.
- Hertfordshire Highways are in the process of arranging a Stage 3 Road Safety Audit of the pedestrian crossing which is due to be completed this financial year.

3.9.3 The main point of discussion was Great Ashby Way and specifically the speeds on approach to the crossing points on the roundabout, as well as the intervisibility between pedestrians and vehicles at the crossing points.

Possible solutions were discussed including a 20mph zone and additional measures to highlight the crossing points and make people aware of the proximity of the school. The intention being to lower speeds in approach to the crossing. This will form the basis of a brief for the feasibility study.

3.9.4 The provision of a signal controlled crossing was also briefly discussed but discounted as part of this referral due to the cost associated with its delivery and the findings of previous investigations undertaken by Safer Routes to School which stated that a suitable location for crossing in the vicinity of the roundabout could not be found.

Efforts will be made to obtain these investigations should the feasibility study be approved by the JMP.

3.10 Highways Work Programme

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

The programme details updates of all current schemes.

3.10.2 The SR CDO attended a Herts Highways/NHDC Liaison Meeting on 9th September 2010 with the Council's Transport Policy Officer and Hertfordshire Highways senior officers to seek clarity on all future highways scheme proposals from JMP that Area Committees are requested to consider for match funding.

An agreement was also reached on the best way forward for the release of all funding during the delivery of schemes from feasibility, to design, to implementation and completion of works.

It was agreed that the matched funded costs of the Design Scheme will be released when Herts Highways officers advise this has commenced with the remaining Construction costs being released at the appropriate time.

The full matched funding for the Feasibility costs will need to be released once the scheme is approved.

- 3.10.3 A new protocol is currently being drawn up for consideration by JMP which will set out the guidelines for full engagement and consultation with Area Committees at stage one prior to any scheme being considered by JMP and thereafter being referred to Area Committees for matched funding support. This is to ensure the Members are fully involved in discussions at the embryonic stages of any highways scheme.
- 3.10.4 The existing process whereby Members are updated on the progress and status of Discretionary funded highways schemes will continue through Members Information. Many of North Herts Parish Councils also receive the weekly Members Information updates which also ensures they are regularly updated on all highways schemes pertinent to their respective parishes and all joint matched-funded highways schemes they have supported.

The Hertfordshire Highways Member bulletins are distributed around the 5th of each month. The current scheme reporting mechanisms only update on Active Works Lists included with HH Members Monthly bulletins. This means that currently the bulletins only update on major schemes and not some of the JMP schemes.

In future, an additional update spreadsheet will be incorporated in to the reporting mechanisms mid-way between each JMP quarterly cycle of meetings. These will also be issued to the Council and copied onto HH County Members, Chair & Vice Chair of JMP.

3.11 Area Committee Work Programme

- 3.11.1 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.

4. FINANCE REPORT

4.1 BACKGROUND

- 4.2 A spreadsheet detailing the total spends to date of the Area Development Budgets is attached as Appendix 1.
- 4.3 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.
- 4.4 The Committee is asked to note the Area Committee Discretionary Base Budget for 2001/11 is £23,709, but having agreed four Memorandum Of Understandings (MOU) totalling £6,699, the current unallocated budget is £13,831.

- 4.5 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.
- 4.6 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 the North Hertfordshire's district-wide Vision, the Council's Mission and the three priorities.

Town Centres
Green Issues
Sustainable Development

6. 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.

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 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.
- 10.2 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.
- 10.3 The total budget for the Committee for 2010/11 is £30,709 including a Ward Members budget of £7,000.
- 10.4 The current unallocated discretionary base budget is £13,831.
- 10.5 The current unallocated Members Ward Discretionary Budget (MWDB) is £7,000.
- 10.6 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 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 2 – Highways Work Programme.
- 13.3 Appendix 3 – Area Committee Work Plan.

14. CONTACT OFFICERS

- 14.1 Garry Gover (Community Development Officer – Southern Rural Area)
Telephone: 01462 474674
E-Mail: garry.gover@north-herts.gov.uk
- 14.2 Stuart Izzard (Community Development Manager)
Telephone 01462 474854
Email stuart.izzard@north-herts.gov.uk
- 14.3 Lois Stewart (Group Accountant – Customer Services)
Telephone: 01462 474566
Email: lois.stewart@north-herts.gov.uk
- 14.4 Mary Caldwell (Planning Control and Conservation Manager)
Telephone: 01462 474613
Email: mary.caldwell@north-herts.gov.uk
- 14.5 Andy Godman (Head of Housing and Public Protection)
Telephone: 01462 474293
Email: andy.godman@north-herts.gov.uk
- 14.6 David Miley (Democratic Services Manager)
Telephone: 01462 474208
Email: david.miley@north-herts.gov.uk

14.7 Brendan Sullivan (Scrutiny Officer)
Telephone: 01462 474612
Email: brendan.sullivan@north-herts.gov.uk

14.8 Jim Brown (Policy and Scrutiny Manager)
Telephone: 01462 474835
Email: jim.brown@north-herts.gov.uk

15. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 15.1 Review of Policies and Procedures for Financial Assistance to Voluntary and Community Organisations, November 2002.
- 15.2 Community Governance Reviews – Full Council Meeting 25th February 2010.