

*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT	AGENDA ITEM No. 9
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TITLE: CHAMPION NEWS AND FINANCE REPORT

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF POLICY, PARTNERSHIPS & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

PORTFOLIO HOLDER: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & RURAL AFFAIRS COUNCILLOR
MRS TRICIA COWLEY

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 2010/11 Rural Grants Fund

Members are advised that the Rural Grants Panel (Formerly known as the Parish Challenge Panel) met on 1st March 2011 and received officer recommendations on this year's Rural Grant applications.

The awards now seek formal approval from the Portfolio Holder for Community Development & Rural Affairs and the Corporate Directors responsible for each grant programme.

A formal Press Release is being prepared in line with the mailing out of the notification letters to the grant applicants and prior to the end of the month.

3.2 Parish Council Support

Community Development Officers are assisting Parish Councils with potential projects that may be eligible for funds via received Planning section 106 / Unilateral Undertakings payments.

Southern Rural Parish projects seeking s106 funds

Kimpton – Play Area Equipment & Court Markings to Village Hall Floor

Codicote – All Weather Courts Surfacing, Fitness Trail, Village Hall Lighting System, Street-scene Project & Enhancement of Informal Open Space.

Knebworth – Installation of Hot Cupboard Facility at the Village Hall.

Ickleford – Creation of New Allotment Area.

Offley – Enhancements to Village Hall.

St Ippolyts - Projects tbc.

3.3 Ward Member Discretionary Budgets

Over the past two months Community Development Officers have (on Member advice) initiated a number of Ward Member Discretionary grant awards under the £500 threshold.

Members' attention is drawn to the detail of grants awarded from the respective Discretionary Grant Budgets on page 4 of Appendix 1 -

Budget expenditure, balances, and carry forwards from the Ward Development Budgets and allocated Visioning Budgets.

3.4 Highways Work Programme

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

Members' attention is drawn to the Highways Works Programme detailing feedback on existing schemes and also updates on proposed schemes seeking Area Committee funding contributions from next financial year's budget.

3.5 Area Committee Work Programme

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 £11,966.
- 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.
- 4.6 Where there are multi member wards, members are advise 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 the 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.

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 Equalities 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 £11,966.
- 10.5 The current unallocated Members Ward Discretionary Budget (MWDB) is £40.
- 10.6 The current unallocated Capital Visioning Budget is £15,600.
- 10.7 Offley Pre-school – Outdoor Garden Area Funding Request

Over the last few winters the garden at Offley Pre-School has become practically unusable due to it being too muddy and waterlogged. The area suffers from poor drainage and the grass gets trodden in extremely easily. There is very little space for the children to ride bikes, play freely and take part in sports. It has been noted by many parents that the group should endeavour to improve a fundamental part of the pre-school.

The group wishes to create a garden that is usable all year round and contribute to a healthy lifestyle for local children. Outdoor play and learning is important in the early years development of children, so the group want to install some substantial tables and seating to take their inside learning programmes outside.

They plan to have some artificial grass laid to create an all weather garden, a track put around the outside for the ride on toys to go around, plus the inclusion of a playhouse, sandpit and veggie boxes to create an interesting and fun environment for the local children attending the Pre-school to enjoy.

Background Information

The pre-school is open two full days and three mornings. From the end of April it will be open an additional afternoon to deal with the demand for places and flexible funding.

The pre-school is run by a dedicated team plus a handful of mums from the local community, who work tirelessly fundraising to help improve the pre-school.

In the last year they have raised funds through band nights (£750), charity runs (£150), raffles and disco (£200) and family walks and BBQ's (£350).

The group has a project budget of £5,000 which includes the above funds and fundraising that has taken place over a number of years

Estimated Project Costs:

Artificial Grass £3,040

Hardcore etc £928 (Possible donation by Aggregate Industries outreach programme)

Base work, membrane and labour £1,480

Rubber matting (Possible donation tbc)
Tree benches £240
Children's work and lunch benches £440 approx
Playhouse £500
Veggie Box (Local parent may make this and donate)
Sandpit £200
Wooden sunshade £ tbc
Toy storage unit £210

The whole project amounts to approximately £7038

The organisers of the group understand that they have been fortunate to receive support in the past and would welcome any financial assistance the committee wishes to consider for this specific part of the pre-school,.

If successful in receiving an award they hope to complete the work over the Easter holiday period and launch the new facility with a fun garden party for the children, parents and all those involved in the project.

- 10.8 Members are requested to consider making funding contributions to the proposed Highways schemes as detailed in Appendix 2.
- 10.9 Members are requested to consider the allocation of any funds within the Area Committee's Budget that are presently uncommitted before the end of this financial year.

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 allocating all uncommitted funds within the Committee's budgets before 24th March 2011.
- 11.3 That the Committee endorses the actions taken by the Community Development Officer to promote greater community capacity and well being for rural communities.
- 11.4 That the Committee considers making a grant award to the Offley Pre-School group to assist in the enhancement of the Outside Garden Area as outlined in section 10.7 of this report.
- 11.5 That the Committee considers allocating the uncommitted funds remaining in the Area Committee's main 2010/11 Discretionary Budget to the ' Parish & Community Projects ' heading within the spreadsheet and carry forward the sum for expenditure in the next financial year 2012/13.

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.
- 12.4 The awarding of financial assistance to voluntary organisations and the use of discretionary spending allows the Committee to further the aims and Strategic Priorities of the Council.

13. APPENDICES

- 13.1 Appendix 1 – Budget expenditure, balances, and carry forwards from the Ward Development Budgets and allocated Visioning Budgets.
- 13.2 Appendix 2 – Highways Work Programme.
- 13.3 Appendix 3 – Grant Form Offley Pre-School

14. CONTACT OFFICERS

- 14.1 Stuart Izzard (Community Development Manager)
Telephone 01462 474854
Email stuart.izzard@north-herts.gov.uk
- 14.2 Lois Stewart (Group Accountant – Customer Services)
Telephone: 01462 474566
Email: lois.stewart@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.

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