

TITLE: CHAMPION NEWS AND FINANCE REPORT

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF POLICY & COMMUNITY SERVICES

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 Rural Grant Awards 2011/12

Following an annual review this year's Rural Grants Programme is being prepared for general circulation to all Parishes by the end of July 2011.

Parish Councils and rural groups / organisations will have until Monday 31st October 2011 to return their completed application forms and project proposals seeking financial support from the respective rural grants funding scheme.

This year there are 3 funding streams open for application:

- **The Community Building Refurbishment Fund**
- **The Playgrounds Fund**
- **Environmental improvement Fund**

Community Building Refurbishment Fund

- The grant funding stream is approximately £25,000
- To fund grants for small to medium size improvement projects
- Open to applications from Parish Councils & Parish Meeting and Village Halls, Community Buildings & Sports Facilities
- Awards for revenue projects with a maximum 50% matched funded
- Looking to award grants between £2,000 to £4,000
- Up to two years to use the grant funds on the intended project
- Must have Parish Council / Parish Meeting Support

Playground Fund

- The grant funding stream is approximately £10,000
- To fund grants for playground improvement projects
- Open to applications from Parish Councils & Parish Meetings
- Awards for revenue projects with a maximum 50% matched funded
- Looking to award grants between £1,000 to £2,500
- Up to two years to use the grant funds on the intended project
- Must have Parish Council / Parish Meeting Support

Environmental Improvement Fund

- The grant funding stream is approximately £14,000
- To fund grants for environmental enhancement, cleansing, litter picking and the purchase of associated equipment, eg grass strimmers
- Grants will not cover projects in existing NHDC or HCC / Highways contract areas
- Available to Parish Councils & Parish meetings only
- Awards to go towards revenue projects between £1,000 maximum & £100 minimum
- 100% funding available and no need for match funding

3.2 Parish Council Support - Planning Contribution Funding

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

Current Southern Rural Parish projects seeking s106 funds

Kimpton – Refurbishment of Village Hall Stage Area

Codicote – Street-scene Project

Graveley – Proposed works to Bus Shelter

Wymondley – Projects tbc

Pirton – Projects tbc

St Ippolyts – Projects tbc

Recent projects where section 106 / Unilateral Undertakings payments have been committed / release include:-

Kimpton – Village Hall Floor & Play Area Equipment

Codicote – Fitness Trail Equipment, Tennis Courts All Weather Surfacing, Drainage at the Recreation Ground & a Lighting Rig at Peace Memorial Hall

Ickleford – Allotment Project

3.3 Other Support to Parish Councils / Rural based groups & initiatives

Pirton – Community Development Officers are assisting the Parish Council in revisiting the development of a Parish Plan for the Village.

Pirton – assistance and advice has been requested in highlighting potential funding sources to refurbish the old Sunday School building behind the Methodist Church, with a view in developing it into a venue for young people.

Wymondley – assistance and advice has been requested by the Parish Council to look into a number of matters at Cickett Close regarding tree ownership and possible funding routes for new play equipment.

Graveley – Community Development Officers are assisting the Parish Council in possible funding routes for new safety surfacing for the Village's play area.

3.4 Launch of the Rural Community Pot – Funding Programme

Members may be aware that as announced at the last North Herts Parish Networking Meeting, a Rural Community Pot funding scheme has now been launched and made available for Parish and Town Councils to apply.

The grant is unique within Hertfordshire, as the funding outcomes will be decided by the applicants themselves i.e. the Parish and Town Councils representatives will review the submitted requests and vote on those they think are most worthy of the funding.

The process has been kept as simple as possible and devised to support local community initiatives. It's being delivered and managed by Carina Helm through her role as County Officer for Herts Association for Parish and Town Councils (HAPTC) and it is the county association that is the accountable body for this project.

The funding scheme has a budget of £20,000 which has been allocated from the North Herts Strategic Partnership – Performance Reward Grant.

Full Scheme details are attached as Appendix 4.

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.

3.6 JMP Highways SRAC Work Programme

The latest JMP Highways Work Programme detailing the joint funded projects agreed by the Committee is attached as Appendix 2.

3.6.1 St Paul's Walden – Lay by / parking arrangements for the Village School

The Chairman of the committee has requested this matter be brought to the Committee's attention and for Members to pass comment which can then be referred to the JMP Highways Committee.

Background

Last year the SRAC advised Herts Highways via the Area Committee / JMP referral method, of a jointly funded proposal to investigate a scheme to formalise the parking arrangements and other Highways related matters to an area of Highway adjacent to the village School in St. Paul's Walden.

Costs were drawn up by HH and the Area Committee committed £6,000 joint funding to the project on the condition that a £1,500 contribution was sort from the Parish Council.

On request from HH in October last year the Authority released £1,752 as a contribution for the design works and TRO arrangements relating to the scheme.

Initial design plans for the scheme were drawn up by HH and approved by the Parish Council which then agreed to part fund the scheme to the sum of £1,500.

In January of this year HH requested that the outstanding balance of £4,248 for the Lay By project be transferred over to HH accounts, in order to secure funds and proceed with the raising of works order to commence the project.

Works commenced and at no time were Community Development Officers or the Clerk and Members of the Parish Council informed of design changes to the scheme of works.

An NHDC invoice for £1,500 to the Parish Council was raised as the agreed contribution to the project, thus making the SRAC's contribution £4,500.

Unfortunately, it is only now after a revised scheme of works has been implemented, that it has become evident to local Members and Parish Members that the outcomes of final works are not those that were originally envisaged.

The Parish Council is therefore looking for some rectification to the works and is withholding it's contribution of £1,500.

Current Position

There has been a great deal of email traffic between all parties including Members of the administration. Clearly there are still outstanding matters to resolve, and at the time of writing this report a request has been made for the matter to be raised as an emergency item at the JMP meeting scheduled for Monday 25th July 2011.

It is hoped that a verbal update will be given to the Committee as a result from the item being raised at the JMP meeting.

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 Members are asked to note the Area Committee Discretionary Budget for 2011/12 is £23,240.

Having agreed four Memorandum Of Understandings (MOU) totalling £6,230 and the approval of other grants this financial year, the current unallocated Discretionary Budget is £14,460.

There is also a further £800 remaining in unallocated Capital Visioning Funds.

- 4.5 The Committee is asked to note that the Ward Members Discretionary Budget for 2010/11 of £700 per Member, should be allocated by March 31st 2012.
- 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 2011/12 was the same as 2010/11.

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 2011/12.
- 10.2 The spreadsheet also details the pre-allocations carried forward from the previous financial year 2010/11 including 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 2011/12 is £30,240 including a Ward Members budget of £7,000.
- 10.4 The current unallocated Discretionary Budget is £14,460
- 10.5 The current unallocated Ward Members Discretionary Budget is £6,000
- 10.6 The current unallocated Capital Visioning Budget is £800.
- 10.7 Knebworth Bowls Club
The Bowls club at Knebworth has been in existence since 1913 and the management committee continually strives to maintain and improve facilities as well as raising the level & standard of Bowls played at the club. It currently has 65 Members, has an open to all access policy and during the season there are home and away games with other North Herts based bowls clubs scheduled most days. The club regularly holds open days and runs matches for other groups such as the local churches team tournament.

The club is making a real push in readiness to celebrate its centenary year in 2013. Unfortunately, a few years ago the clubhouse and adjoining stores were subject to arson with everything burnt to the ground with peripheral damaged to the greens and other parts of the facility. The club has however, put the past behind them and renewed almost everything by themselves through local fundraising and club subscriptions.

The club still requires some external funding to address a number of the outstanding rectification works and renewal of essential equipment. The club has therefore applied for grant funding via the Committee's main Discretionary Budget and asks Members to consider a grant award for the following works / items:

• Works to the green watering system including the installation of an integral valve and main water pump	£620
• Installation of perimeter ditch liners to the green	£300
• Refurbishment of the Main Mower	£300
• Provision and installation of new external Club noticeboard	<u>£250</u>
	<u>Total £1,470</u>

10.8 Ward Member Discretionary Grants

10.8.1 For the development of a junior Knebworth & Codicote Football Team and relevant support equipment & league fees, Councillors Bardett, Brindley and Jane Gray have each committed £200 from their respective Ward Member Discretionary Budgets.

10.8.2 Cllr Brindley has committed £250 from his Ward Member Discretionary Budget to the Codicote Peace Memorial Hall to help part fund an external water supply and watering system.

10.8.3 Cllr Brindley has committed £150 from his Ward Member Discretionary Budget to the Codicote Day Centre in support of their annual Christmas outing for members.

11. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

11.1 The Committee is asked to note the budgetary expenditure, balances and carry forwards from the Committee's Discretionary Budget, Ward Member Discretionary 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.

11.3 That the Committee considers a grant award to Knebworth Bowls Club as outlined in section 10.7 of this report.

11.4 That the Committee considers appropriate action and comment with regard to 3.6.1 of this report concerning the recent Highways works at St Paul's Walden in the formalisation of Lay by / parking arrangements adjacent to the Village School.

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 – Area Committee Work Programme.
- 13.4 Appendix 4 – Rural Community Pot – Funding Programme.
- 13.5 Appendix 5 – Grant From Knebworth Bowls Club

14. CONTACT OFFICERS

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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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