

*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT	AGENDA ITEM No. 6
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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 Parish & Town Council Networking Meeting

The Community Development Manager is to attend the next Parish & Town Council Networking Meeting schedule for 6th October 2011 at Weston Village Hall. Items on the agenda include;

- The consideration of applications and distribution of funds from the Rural Community Fund (a funding 'pot' of £20,000 provided by the North Herts LSP toward rural projects)
- Themes for presentation & discussion at the North Herts Parish & Town Council Conference

- Election process for PC/TC representatives on the North Herts Local Strategic Partnership
- Parish matters for sharing

3.2 NHDC Parish & Town Council Conference 2011

The revised date for this year's conference has been set for the evening of Tuesday 22nd November 2011 to be held at the Council Offices in Gernon Road.

Officers have liaised with the Parish reps on Conference Planning Group regarding the following discussion themes:

- Sharing Resources/better ways of working, not only between tiers of local government, but between the parish and town councils themselves
- Planning and Overview of Section 106
- Grants
- Better Communication
- Training Skills for Parish Councillors and Clerks

As suggested at a previous Parish & Town Council Networking Evening, officers are endeavouring to seek relevant questions from all the Parishes, Town & Community Councils for submission in advance and based on the above themes.

Each Parish, Town or Community Council has been asked to consider the above and prioritise the three most relevant themes that they would like to raise up to three questions (total) on and send them back to the Authority for collation and response.

The intention is to circulate the majority of these themed questions along with the appropriate responses from the relevant Council Officers, as part of the Conference papers sent out a few weeks before the event itself.

3.3 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

Codicote – Street-scene Project

Graveley – Proposed works to Bus Shelter

Wymondley – Proposed Bench

Pirton – Projects tbc

St Ippolyts – Projects tbc

3.4 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 to developing it into a venue for young people.

Wymondley – assistance and advice has been requested by the Parish Council in revisiting the development of a Parish Plan for the Village

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.

In addition, Highways officers have recently asked for the committed sums to be released in advance for some of the proposed jointly funded schemes, a number of which relate to those suggested by the Southern Rural Area Committee. See the final page of Appendix 2

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

The matter received a lengthy and detailed debate at the last JMP meeting, which resulted in County Councillor Thake suggesting that he, and if possible, the Chair of the Southern Rural Area Committee meet with the Parish Council to try and resolve the situation.

The Community Development Manager has been requested to attend a site meeting with Roger Flowerday, Herts Highways and Emma Payne, the Parish Clerk, on Monday 3rd October 2011.

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 £13,790.

- 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, 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 20010/11.

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 £13,790
- 10.5 The current unallocated Ward Members Discretionary Budget is £6,000
- 10.6 Codicote Tennis Club

The Tennis Club's overall aim is to ensure that the community it serves remains active and healthy by providing a safe environment to play tennis. It is an inclusive small village tennis club that currently provides such opportunities. Unfortunately, owing to severe winter weather and general use, parts of the courts surface are becoming unsafe to play on. Therefore, the Club aims is to rebuild two of the three courts.

The Club currently has 170 members making it by far the most inclusive and accessed club in the village and surrounding villages. Over the last few years their junior numbers have dramatically increased and they have introduced coaching sessions for juniors and 50% membership discount to juniors at the local school along with free coaching days and free equipment. They also have a large older community that access the courts with special sessions for them run by the older members of the club.

The Club provides competitive opportunities for all and enters three times as many teams in the Hertfordshire Datchworth League than other local clubs.

The current porous macadam courts are 13 years old and the life cycle of courts of this type is 10 years. Apart from the visual evidence of exposed tree roots, subsidence and moss on the courts, the Club commissioned an independent report from Lee West Associates (Chartered surveyors and Construction Consultants).

The resulting document highlighted the issues of court displacement, root ingress, pitting and fretting to certain sections of the two courts that needed to be repaired within two years from last July 2010.

The Club commissioned a 'Scope of Works' document from Lee West Associates that set out the requirements of the works and the quotes that have been return range between £33,000 and £43,000.

To date the Club has raised almost £30,000 through an extensive fundraising programme which contains many innovative ideas. Up to date details are listed on the Club's Website www.codicotetennisclub.co.uk

They expect the works to be undertaken over the Autumn period and have full backing from the LTA and many other organisations.

The Parish Council has shown its full support and recognition to how important the project is to Codicote Village and has managed to set aside an 1/8th of the money needed from its yearly precept.

Other donated funds come from, County Councillor Richard Thake, the Club's own Court Sinking Fund and the LTA .

10.7 MoU Grant Awards Review

There are currently 4 Memoranda of Understandings (MoU) within the Southern Rural Area Committee budget.

- Knebworth Town Twinning - £120
- Scoots - £4,690
- Codicote Village Day - £710
- Rural Village Newsletter - £710

Representatives from each of these groups have been invited to provide a short presentation to Members at the Area Committee meeting scheduled for Thursday 29th September 2011.

Unfortunately the CDA, the coordinating body for the Scoots Project has its AGM scheduled for 29th September 2011 and it is not possible for a representative to present at the Area Committee meeting.

It has therefore been suggested that a presentation is made to the Area Committee at the next meeting scheduled in November 2011.

Detail of funding currently provided to the MoU organisations, as well as indicative funding for future years is included in Appendix 5.

As part of the Council's efficiencies & saving plans, MoU grant entitlements were reduced by 7.1% for the 2011/12 financial year, with 7.1% off the overall grant total each year for the subsequent three years.

Members are asked to consider future commitments under the MoU process and note that any further award of MoU grants remain subject to a 7.1% annual reduction each year of the 3 year term of the understandings; members may wish to explore and discuss options to reduce or remove some grants in favour of others, provided the overall 7.1% saving from the Area Committee's MoU budget can be achieved.

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 Codicote Tennis Club for the renewing of two of the current macadam courts as outlined in section 10.6 of this report.
- 11.4 That the Committee reviews the current MoU grant awards and considers future funding arrangements.
- 11.5 That the Committee considers the proposed release of committed funds to Herts Highways in respect to the joint funded Southern Rural Area related schemes as listed on the last page of Appendix 2 - JMP Highways & SARC Work Programme.

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 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 – Codicote Tennis Club Grant Form.
- 13.5 Appendix 5 – MoU Forecast Spreadsheet.

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.