

*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

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 & Community Council Networking Meeting

The Community Development Manager attended the Parish & Town Council Networking Meeting on 6th October 2011 at Weston Village Hall.

Items discussed and decisions made included;

- The consideration of applications and distribution of funds from the Community Rural Pot Fund. (see appendix 5)
- Confirmation of the main 3 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.
- The proposed setting up of an Association of Town, Parish & Community Councils for North Herts.
- Parish matters for sharing & networking.

3.2 NHDC Parish, Town & Community Council Conference 2011

This year's conference is scheduled for Tuesday 22nd November 2011 at 6pm at the Council Offices in Gernon Road

The Final Agenda for the meeting is attached to this report as Appendix 4

An initial verbal update will be made to the Southern Rural Committee by the CDM as part of this report.

3.3 North Herts DC – Rural Grants Fund Programme 2011/12

The closing date for applications to this year's Rural Grants Fund was Friday 28th October.

Please see Appendix 6 attached which is a summary listing of all those who applied, and a short description of their project(s). Officers will be assessing all the submitted grant material over the next few weeks and plan to convene the Rural Grants Panel mid December, Chaired by Cllr Ian Knighton.

Award announcements are likely to be made known mid January 2012 following the Panel's decisions and formal sign off by the Head of Service and Cllr Mrs Tricia Cowley.

3.4 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

Wymondley – Proposed Bench in Siccut Close

Reed – Play Area and Sports Equipment Installation

3.5 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 in revisiting the development of a Parish Plan for the Village

3.6 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.

3.7 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.

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 £12,540.

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 North Hertfordshire's district-wide Vision, the council's three priorities for 2011/12 which are.

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 £12,540
- 10.5 The current unallocated Ward Members Discretionary Budget is £6,000
- 10.6 Codicote Streetscape Project

Codicote Streetscape Project is an innovative community led project which endeavours to embrace the emerging Localism and Big Society agenda by empowering local communities to have their say on what is required in their area.

The project forms part of the Codicote Parish Plan objectives and seeks to enhance streetscape improvements safety, quality of the environment and ease parking facilities by designing a quality streetscape in the High Street and adjoining roads which link places and people.

The project team have developed possible design solutions for the main High Street and for the southern end of the High Street and Newtown.

Representatives from the Streetscape Project Group are to make a formal presentation to the Committee at the beginning of the meeting.

- 10.7 Scoots – Feedback Report & Future MoU Grant Award Review

Kate Belinis Chief Executive of Herts Community Development Association, the parent body responsible for the coordination of the Scoots project, is to make a formal presentation to the Committee at the beginning of the meeting, to update Members on the projects performance to date and also to detail plans and objectives for the future.

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 the Codicote Streetscape Project as outlined in section 10.6 of this report and detailed in Appendix 7
- 11.4 That the Committee considers the future funding arrangements associated to the Scoots project, as outlined in section 10.7 of this report and following the detailed in Appendix 8 Scoots formal feedback report.

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 – Parish, Town & Community Council Conference Agenda.
- 13.5 Appendix 5 – Community Pot Grant Awards Spreadsheet.
- 13.6 Appendix 6 – NHDC Rural Grant Fund 2011 – Summary of Applications Received.
- 13.7 Appendix 7 – Codicote Streetscape Project Grant Form & Project Brief.
- 13.8 Appendix 8 – Scoots Project Feedback Report 2011 – To Follow

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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