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| *PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT | AGENDA ITEM No. 7 |
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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 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 / UU funds

Graveley – Bus Shelter, Local Information Boards & Play Area Safety Surfacing

Whitwell – Football Development & Pitch Improvement

Ickleford – Allotments Project

3.2 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.

Assistance and advice is also being provided 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.

Gt Ashby – Community Development Manager be will attending the Gt Ashby Community Council's Annual Meeting, Friday 1st June 2012 7.00pm at the Community Centre.

CDM also advising and assisting the Great Ashby Community Centre Management Association in seeking funding for the development of Circles Community Cafe within the centre.

Wymondley - Community Development Manager to assist the Parish Council in seeking external funds and development of plans for a new pavilion on the recreation ground.

Wymondley / Willian / Graveley - Community Development Manager assisting Ken Needham from the local RAF Association in drawing up event & traffic management plans with regard to the 100th Anniversary of the first Air Crash of a Royal Flying Corps aeroplane under military command.

The memorial for the crash site and loss of the pilot & navigator, is situated along the Willian / Wymondley road. The road is to be closed for approximately 2 hours on Sunday 9th September 2012 to enable an RAF Memorial Service to take place.

Knebworth - Community Development Manager is assisting the Parish Council in drawing up medium & long term plans with regards to future development in the village along with identifying the need for future community infrastructure and provision.

St Pauls Walden & Offley & Cockernhoe – the Clerk for both Parishes, Emma Payne, is to take up a full time position with Redbourn from the middle of next month.

During her time as Clerk to both Parishes Emma has been an exemplary advocate of partnership working and a dedicated employee in assisting both Parish & District Members in tackling local issues and initiatives. She has also been a great asset to the Authority as a touchstone and consultee regarding the development of a number of NHDC policy documents & strategic groups.

The Council has assisted in the recruitment for new Clerks by advertising the positions on it's website and at the time of writing this report it is understood that both posts have received a number of applications.

Knebworth - Community Development Officers are assisting the organisers of this year's festival in programming matters and waste & recycling management. The North Herts Children's Services Team will be in attendance delivering a range of Children's activities.

3.3 Area Committee Work Programme

The proposed Area Committee Work Programme is attached as Appendix 2.

The programme details updates of on-going projects and it can itemise any projects proposed for future discussion at Committee.

3.4 JMP Highways SRAC Work Programme

The latest JMP Highways Work Programme detailing the joint funded projects agreed by the Committee is attached as Appendix 3.

4. BACKGROUND – Finance Report

4.1 A spreadsheet detailing the total spends to date of the Area Development Budgets is attached as Appendix 1.

4.2 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.

4.3 Members are asked to note the Area Committee Discretionary Budget for 2012/13 is £17,010.

4.4 Having agreed not to award further grants under the Memorandum of Understandings process, Members are asked to note the current level of unallocated funds in the former MoU budget for 2012/13 is £5,790.

4.5 The Committee is asked to note that the Ward Members Discretionary Budget for 2012/13 of £700 per Member, should be allocated by March 31st 2013.

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. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 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.

5.2 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.

5.3 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.

- 5.4 The Committee has delegated powers to administer funds from the budgets described.

6. FINANCIAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 In the past few years there has been no inflationary allowance to the main Area Committee Budget and the 2012/13 baseline budget has stayed the same as the previous year.
- 6.2 The former MoU Budget is subject to a 7.1% reduction each year through to financial year 2015/16.

7. HUMAN RESOURCE AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 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.
- 7.2 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, including the Equality Standard for Local Government.

8. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS

- 8.1 Consultation with Members has occurred in connection with the allocation of funds for Community Projects.
- 8.2 Consultation with the respective officers and external agencies/groups has taken place with regard to funding proposals for Area Committee Discretionary Development Funds.

9. ISSUES & FUNDING DECISIONS TO BE MADE

- 9.1 Members are asked to note the information detailed in Appendix 1 SRAC Budget Spreadsheet, which relates to the Area Committee budget balances for the current financial year 2012/13.
- 9.2 The spreadsheet also details pre-allocated sums carried forward from the previous financial year 2011/12 including balances and past expenditure relating to the allocated and un-allocated Area Capital Visioning Budgets available to the Committee.
- 9.3 The total budget for the Committee for 2012/13 is £ including a Ward Members budget of £7,000.

9.4 The current unallocated funds within the Committee's Discretionary Budget is £17,010

9.5 The current unallocated funds within the Ward Members Discretionary Budget is £6,550

9.6 The current unallocated funds within the former MoU Budget is £5,790

9.7 **Hexton – The refurbishment of the St Faith's Centre**

The St Faith's Centre at Hexton is quite unique not only within Hertfordshire but also from a national point of view, as it is one of only a few old Churches throughout the country that have been converted into fully functioning Community Halls / Centres during the week, whilst still managing to facilitate Church Services and ceremonies at the weekends.

The Community Centre is well used by a number of local community organisations in the area including a local Playgroup, regular Farmers Market, School functions & events (as the school has no formal school hall), Flower & Produce Festivals, musical concerts & recitals, as well as being hired for family social events & parties.

The Centre's management committee has embarked on a mammoth task to raise funds to refurbish various areas of the structure including stabilising the remains of the old church tower that collapsed many years ago.

English Heritage have agreed to a grant fund a project to re roof the South Aisle, repairs to the Knave, Towers, Aisles and Chancel. This programme with English Heritage will cover a project development phase which will result in a detailed specification for the actual repair / restoration work.

This development phase will cost £35,260.50, to which English Heritage will contribute £25,000 but leaves a shortfall of approximately £10,000 to find this year.

If this is achieved English Heritage have made an 'in principle' offer of a further £197,000 towards the estimated total cost of £244,273.50 to cover the actual works to the building to take place from next year.

The management committee is quite confident that the gap of £50k for the works stage could be met by a raft of identified external funders and Community Development Officers will be giving the Committee support and advice to achieve this over the next year.

The current drive is therefore to seek and secure local grants to meet the £10k target that is required to unlock the initial £25k grant from English Heritage to undertake the development stage of the project.

9.8 **Graveley – Installation of Play Area Safety Surfacing**

At the last meeting of the Southern Rural Area Committee on Thursday 22nd March 2012, Graveley Parish Councillor Peter Bracey addressed Members with an appraisal of the Parish's current initiative to install safety surfacing beneath the various items of play equipment within the Village's small play area.

A full grant application has now been received by Officers with total cost for the works estimated at £8,830. The Parish Council has already secured £2,500 in grant funding from the Playground Fund and is looking to unlock £900 of Planning Contribution funding with the assistance from Community Development Officers.

In addition the Parish Council has also applied for a grant of £2,000 from the Luton Airport Community Fund and is awaiting to hear if this has been successful.

The Parish Council is seeking financial assistance from the Southern Rural Committee and is prepared to bridge the gap from its own budgets.

9.9 Ickleford – Highway Signage for Burial Ground

The Parish Council wishes to improve highway signage to the village's burial ground.

Formal quotes have been obtained from Herts Highways for the design works and installation costs for 3 highway approved signs to be located within the Village.

The total cost of the scheme is £950 - £100 for the design & £850 for the signage including installation.

The Parish Council is seeking financial assistance from the Southern Rural Committee and is prepared to bridge the gap from its own budgets and any other sources of funding that may be available.

9.10 Gt Wymondley – Village Hall Refurbishment

In 2011 the Trustees of the Village Hall had assets of £9,700, of which £6,000 was a reserve to cover the possible demolition and making good of the site should the Hall have to close. The Trustees are concerned that the Hall is in excess of 100 years old and that they potentially could be personally faced with repair costs in excess of such reserves.

Recently a revised quote has been obtained estimating £9,000 to be a more accurate figure partly due to the roof containing low levels of asbestos.

In June 2010 the Council contracted a surveying company to carry out assessments on all the village halls throughout the District to provide a condition survey for each building / facility. In Gt Wymondley Village Hall's case it was estimated that the Trustees needed to spend in the region of £49,000.

This triggered a strategic review by the Trustees and a summary was presented to the Parish Council in January 2012.

Late last year the Trustees engaged a Chartered Surveyor to provide a report on the work necessary to keep the Hall operational for a further 10 years. From this a local builder was engaged to cost the work and in some cases he could only estimate as a firm quote would have required further investigative work, eg on the guttering down pipes and soak-aways.

The major priority is the gents toilet, currently situated in a lean-to fixed to the rear of the property, with severe damp issues.

An application has been made to obtain £2,000 from unlocking potential Planning Contribution funding available to projects in the Wymondley area and via the Parish Council.

The remaining funds required total approximately £6,200

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| Replace 3 rotten windows | £1,200 |
| Guttering and down pipes | £1,500 (possibly more) |
| Painting exterior | £2,500 |
| New front door | £500 |
| Work on kitchen | £500 |
| TOTAL | <u>£6,200</u> |

The Trustees have stated that County Councillor Richard Thake has agreed an 'in principle' grant of £1,000 from his Locality Budget.

The Trustees are seeking financial assistance from the Southern Rural Committee and have also requested financial assistance from the Parish Council.

9.11 **Kimpton – Village Choir Equipment**

Kimpton Village Choir was set up last October on a voluntary basis with the aim of giving local people who may not have sung before the opportunity to sing with others on a regular basis.

The group currently has 30 regular members ranging from 12 to 78 years of age and meets for weekly rehearsals during term time on Monday evenings in the school hall. The group also arranges regular performances and has recently held a Saturday 'Singing for Beginners' workshop which had 35 participants.

The group is seeking financial assistance from the Southern Rural Committee to purchase 25 Choir Folders to hold the music sheets whilst group members are performing, costing £142.50 in total and an advertising A Board at £49.99 to display outside of the rehearsal and performance venues giving details of the Choir.

.It is understood that assistance from the Parish Council has been sought in the past and the Community Development Manager will endeavour to update Members of the Committee verbally at the meeting.

9.12 Ward Member Discretionary Grants

Members are asked to note the following Ward Member Discretionary Grants that have been recently allocated /awarded:

| Member | Grant |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|
| Cllr Barnard's Ward Budget | |
| Kings Walden Big Lunch Event | £150 |
| Cllr Cowley's Ward Budget | |
| Ickleford Cricket Club | £300 |

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 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.
- 10.2 That the Committee endorses the actions taken by the Community Development Officer to promote greater community capacity and well being for rural communities.
- 10.3 That the Committee considers a grant award for the development phase of refurbishment works to the St Faith's Centre as outlined in section 9.7 of this report and detailed in Appendix 4.
- 10.4 That the Committee considers a grant award to Graveley Parish Council for the installation of Play Area Safety Surfacing as outlined in section 9.8 of this report and detailed in Appendix 5.
- 10.5 That the Committee considers a grant award to Ickleford Parish Council for the installation of approved Highway Signage for Burial Ground the as outlined in section 9.9 of this report and detailed in Appendix 6.
- 10.6 That the Committee considers a grant award to the Trustee of the Gt Wymondley Village Hall for refurbishment works as outlined in section 9.10 of this report and detailed in Appendix 7.
- 10.7 That the Committee considers a grant award to the Kimpton Village Choir group as outlined in section 9.11 of this report and detailed in Appendix 8..

11. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 11.1 To ensure that the Committee are kept informed of the work of the Community Development Officer.
- 11.2 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.
- 11.3 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.
- 11.4 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.

12. APPENDICES

- 12.1 Appendix 1 – SRAC Budget Spreadsheet.
- 12.2 Appendix 2 – Area Committee Work Programme.
- 12.3 Appendix 3 – Highways Work Programme.
- 12.4 Appendix 4 – Grant Form – Hexton – The refurbishment of the St Faith’s Centre
- 12.5 Appendix 5 – Grant Form – Graveley – Installation of Play Area Safety Surfacing
- 12.6 Appendix 6 – Grant Form – Ickleford – Highway Signage for Burial Ground
- 12.7 Appendix 7 – Grant Form – Gt Wymondley – Village Hall Refurbishment
- 12.8 Appendix 8 – Grant Form – Kimpton Village Choir

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14. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 14.1 Review of Policies and Procedures for Financial Assistance to Voluntary and Community Organisations, November 2002.