

*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

Whitwell – Football Development & Pitch Improvement

Ickleford – Allotments Project & Footpath Signage

Gt Ashby – Play Equipment

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 and developing plans to refurbish the old Sunday School building into a venue for young people.

Gt Ashby – Officers are assisting the Great Ashby Community Centre Management Association in seeking funding for the development of Circles Community Cafe within the centre.

Wymondley / Willian / Graveley - Community Development Manager is 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.

3.3 North Herts Association of Town, Parish & Community Councils

Officers are providing support to the group and recently attended a networking meeting in June with agenda discussion items on:-

- Block Insurance cover for Parishes re potential economies and standardisation of policies.
- The potential of operating another round of the Rural Pot funding programme for 2012/13 via further funding from the NH LSP.
- An update on the NHDC Rural Grants Programme 2012/13.
- The development of Neighbourhood Plans.
- The New Code of Conduct for Councils.
- The Annual TP&CC Conference – target date Thursday 11th October 2012.
- Proposed LSP Aspirations 2012.
- Review of the NHDC Parish Charter.

3.4 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.

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 further award grants under 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 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. 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.

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 current level of unallocated funds within the Committee's Discretionary Budget is £13,484.
- 9.4 The current level of unallocated funds within the Ward Members Discretionary Budget is £6,300
- 9.5 The current level of unallocated funds within the former MoU Budget is £5,790
- 9.6 **Codicote & Wymondley – Proposed Summer visits Wheels Mobile Youth Project**

Over the past two months officers have been working with Tashmina Hoque, the new Rural Youth & Community Development Officer from Pro-Action. (the youth agency contracted by County to help develop rural youth initiatives across Hertfordshire)

In each District, Pro Action's work has focused on villages that have no current dedicated Youth Work provision, but possibly have the potential to support some initial localised initiatives, with the endeavour of sustaining something more permanent for the long term.

In summary, Pro Action along with Community Development and other youth professionals from Youth Connexions and Groundwork UK have highlighted Codicote & Wymondley as potential villages for some initial youth work / initiatives over the summer holiday period.

Pro Action has recently liaised with both Parish Councils in order to get their support in identifying resources and to determine a local commitment to deliver a programme of youth work sessions in August, followed up by the delivery of some sustainable youth work coordinated by trained local volunteers with supported by Tashmina Hoque.

Plans have been developed to offer the 'Wheels Mobile Project to visit both villages for 5 consecutive Thursday evenings throughout August. The first session in the late afternoon (possibly 4pm to 6pm) and the next later (7pm-9pm) depending on times it takes the bus to get from Codicote to Wymondley.

The Bus has been converted to provide a rolling youth venue which can park up and offer a range of activities to groups of Young People in isolated areas.

Both Parishes are very keen on the idea of developing youth provision and supportive of what has been suggested thus far. They also seem quite hopeful that they would be able to recruit volunteers from the local community to support the summer sessions and additional activity for September.

The cost of the Bus visiting both villages is £315 per night, with a total cost of the 5 weeks programme being £1,575.

Officers are looking for support from the Parishes re advertising and promoting the summer sessions within the villages and then to secure suitable venues at their cost to deliver youth activities from September onwards.

Members are asked to consider making a call on the pre-committed funds for Youth Activities within the Area Committee Budget and Officers will endeavour to see if other funding can be secured to help support the activities in both villages for the long term.

Members are asked to note that the respective Ward Members and the Chairman of the Committee have been consulted on this matter prior to the proposal coming before the Southern Rural Area Committee.

The Chairman has suggested that the Parishes are asked to find £100 (£50 each) for all 5 proposed visits, equating to £500 in total and that Members may consider funding the balance £1,075 from funds available to the Committee.

Members are advised that following the Grant awards made at the last Area Committee the sum remaining in pre-committed heading 'Youth Activities' is £2,550.

9.7 Redemption House Car Park, Knebworth

As part of the wider Knebworth Parking Review, some commuter vehicles currently parking On Street will be displaced. In addition through the imminent introduction of short stay parking charges in St Martins car park, long stay parking by village employees will also be displaced. The railway station car park also has limited capacity and is regularly full with the exemption of the 4 premium spaces at the front entrance.

Officers have identified a potential area of land which could be considered as a lease option for the provision of alternative long stay parking, which is situated opposite the station car park. The land is owned by the Knebworth Village Trust and leased by Redemption House Church. Since occupying the offices, the Redemption House Church has made limited use of the car parking area and it remains empty on a daily basis.

In preliminary discussions the Redemption House Church has indicated that it would be willing to consider leasing the land to the Authority, so potentially it can be made available for commuter parking. This would be through the sale of parking permits.

At present there are 24 marked bays in a series of three sections, these are split by a small area of vegetation. 3 additional bays are at the entrance, 2 of which are marked Redemption House Visitors. Network Rail have a right of access through the car park to a gated area of land.

In order to progress this initiative funding is required to undertake a feasibility study to identify the costs associated in bringing the car park up to a suitable standard as to charge for permits.

This includes:

- Tidying up of vegetation throughout the site but particularly the small island areas and the pedestrian steps down to Kerr Close.
- Guidance on provision of appropriate lighting and associated costs.
- Removal of wooden fencing along railway boundary.
- Any reconfiguration of spaces that would increase capacity.

The feasibility study is crucial to determine whether the proposal is a viable option as a lease agreement. At present the surfacing and marking appear in good order, although it is very overgrown, there's no lighting, with some evidence of vandalism and parts of the wooden fence that runs along the boundary with the railway tracks have fallen off thus presenting a safety concern.

A preliminary quote for this feasibility study has come in at £1,500 to £2,000

Prior consultation with the District Ward Members for Knebworth and the Herts County Councillor for the area has taken place.

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 awarding support funding of £1,075 to the Wheels Mobile Youth Project to visit Codicote & Wymondley during the Summer holidays as outlined in section 9.6 of this report.
- 10.4 That the Committee considers awarding support funding of up to £2,000 for a feasibility study to look at the potential provision of a Car Parking Area outside of the Redemption House Church offices in Knebworth as outlined in section 9.7 of this report.

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.

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14. BACKGROUND PAPERS

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