

**SOUTHERN RURAL COMMITTEE
27 SEPTEMBER 2012**

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

AGENDA ITEM No.

6

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 and local groups with potential projects that may be eligible for funds via received Planning contributions..

Current Southern Rural Parish projects seeking funds via Unilateral Undertakings:

Whitwell – Football Development & Pitch Improvement

Funds amounting to £1,709.91 approved and to be released to St. Paul's Walden Parish Council.

Ickleford – Cricket Club Mower

Officers drawing up submission with Parish Council.

Wymondley – Football Pitch Enhancements

Officers drawing up submission with the Soccer Club for the Parish Council to consider.

Graveley – Play Area Safety Surfacing & Environmental Boards

Funds amounting to £2,036.56 approved and to be released to Graveley Parish Council.

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. The new business plan from the group is currently under consideration, and once agreed, will require a Cabinet report to be submitted, requesting Cabinet approval for officers to go back to Croudace and renegotiate the use of existing planning grants.

Wymondley / Willian / Graveley – RAFA Memorial Service on Sunday 9th September 2012 to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the first Air Crash of a Royal Flying Corps aeroplane under military command. At the time of writing this report it is understood that the event, the planning and road closures for which were assisted by the CDM, went extremely well and blessed by extremely good weather.

Ickleford - The second Ickleford Photographic and Art Group Exhibition was held on 23rd and 24th June 2012 at Ickleford Lavender Farm. Officers from the Community Development section supported the group by providing display boards and advice. The exhibition was very successful with a display of photographs, paintings and ceramics and pupils from Ickleford Primary School also took part in the exhibition by displaying their paintings and collages. It is intended to continue this Exhibition annually and there are plans to investigate whether to have an exhibitions which covers other Southern Rural villages.

Codicote - The Community Development Manager and Community Development Officer for Hitchin visited the Cats Survival Trust, to see if any advice or support could be given. The trust's work is quite inspirational, in particular their work with endangered species and breeding programmes, plus their plans to save acres of forestland in seven worldwide countries. More information can be found on the Trust's website www.catsurvivaltrust.org.

3.3 North Herts Association of Town, Parish & Community Councils

Officers are providing support to the group current areas of work include:-

- 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 revised and now may be Wednesday 25th October 2012.
- Proposed LSP Aspirations 2012.
- Review of the NHDC Parish Charter.

3.4 Codicote & Wymondley – Summer visits of the Wheels Mobile Youth Project update

The Wheels Mobile Youth Bus Project visited both villages on 5 consecutive Thursday nights throughout the School Summer Holiday period.

The average attendance to the 2 hour sessions in each village was 10 young people at Wymondley and 20 at Codicote. Those attending participated in arts & crafts, various sporting activities, food making and most importantly a consultation session on what they would like to see happen for young people in their respective villages.

At the last sessions there was a concerted effort to seek potential volunteers and helpers to keep the momentum going with the view of creating some form of permanent provision in each village.

Free training via Pro Action has been offered to those wishing to get involved and representative within each Parish have been charged with developing activities further with support from the Rural Development Officer from Pro Action.

Further updates on the progress of Youth activity / provision will be detailed in future CDO reports to the Committee.

3.5 Bluebell Children's Centre

The Children's Centre which covers the villages of Whitwell, St Ippolyts, Preston, Little Wymondley and Breachwood Green, as well as part of Hitchin, has had a busy Summer with lots of activities for parents and youngsters. These included Stay And Play sessions with outside play in Whitwell and Breachwood Green and a Welly Walk in Preston. Other activities have included a Grandparents Group, Rhyme time, Job Centre Plus for lone parent interviews and Beginners biking.

Term time activities start on 10th September 2012 and the Centre plans to reach more families in the villages and the isolated rural areas to improve the outcomes for these families by increased outreach work.

3.6 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 £11,234
- 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 **Kimpton Pre-School – Creation of an all weather outside Play Area**

Over the last few winters & this summer the outside grassed area at Kimpton Pre-School has become practically unusable for long periods owing to it being too muddy and waterlogged. The area suffers from poor drainage and the grass gets trodden in extremely easily.

The group wishes to create an artificial grassed outside area that is usable all year round to contribute to a healthy lifestyle for the 30+ local children who regularly attend. Outdoor play and learning is important in the early years development of children and the group would like to develop their outside learning programmes further.

The pre-school is run by a dedicated team plus a handful of volunteers from the local community, who work tirelessly fundraising to help improve the pre-school.

Over the last year they have raised funds in the region of £1,025 towards the project which is costed at £4,212 in total.

The organisers of the group understand that they have been fortunate to receive support in the past from Cllr Bishop's Ward Member Budget and would welcome any financial assistance the Area Committee wishes to consider for this specific part of the pre-school.

9.7 **Wymondley Meaders Football Club**

The Club is seeking funding assistance to purchase equipment to help enhance the standard of Football to be played at Wymondley and facilitate the regular playing of 3 teams:-

2 adult male teams - Wymondley Meaders FC (NHCSFL Division 3), CCFC (HSL Premier Division)

1 youth team - Baldock Templars Youth (Royston Crow League)

All teams are Herts FA affiliated sides and they are looking to purchase the following items of equipment.

2 x sets of adult football goals, supports and nets at £1,002 each set

1 x line marking machine at £360

2 x sets of 30mm corner flag poles at £50.40 each set

2 x sets of corner flags at £9.60 inc each set

Total £ 2,484

In addition, it is understood that the playing surface might benefit from a better drainage system, as it is believed the original channels were filled in a few years back.

The club however says that it holds up fairly well and it might be something they can find funding for over the coming season and address next summer.

With this in mind the CDM will work with the Club and Parish Council to see if any Planning Contribution UU funds can be potentially unlocked to enhance the playing surface.

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 £1,500 to Kimpton Pre-School to assist in the creation of an all weather outside play area as outlined in section 9.6 of this report.
- 10.4 That the Committee considers awarding support funding of £1,424 to Wymondley Meaders FC to assist in the purchasing of Football Pitch Equipment 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.
- 12.3 Appendix 3 – Grant Form – Kimpton Pre-School – All Weather Outside Play Area.
- 12.4 Appendix 4 – Grant Form – Wymondley Meaders FC – Football Equipment.

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14. BACKGROUND PAPERS

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