

*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT	AGENDA ITEM No. 8
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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 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:

Ickleford – Cricket Club Mower & Signage associated with the Hicca Way

Requests for funding submitted to Planning Section for £ 772.56 & £444 respectively.

Wymondley – Football Pitch Enhancements at Tower Close Recreation Ground

Request for funding submitted to Planning Section for £ 1,821.21

Preston – Storage Facility on Recreation Ground

Request for funding submitted to Planning Section for £ 2,084.38

Offley – Village Hall Enhancements & Parish Notice Board

Request for funding being drawn up for consideration £357.43

3.2 Other Support to Parish Councils / Rural based groups & initiatives

Pirton – Community Development Officers are assisting the Parish in the final stages of developing a Parish Plan for the Village and the working group is now at the stage of seeking support funding from the Area Committee to assist with the publication of the final plan. (see 9.8 of this report re Pirton Parish Plan)

Gt Ashby – Officers are assisting the Great Ashby Community Centre Management Association in the development of Circles Community Cafe within the centre. Officers have asked the Rural Business Advisor, Richard Hardiman to meet up with the group to assist where possible, including with their final business plan, and signpost them to any funding sources that might be available.

3.3 Rural Grants Programme 2012/13 (Parish Challenge)

The closing date for this year's applications to the Rural Grants Fund was Friday 28th September 2012.

Members attention is drawn to Appendix 4 which details a summary of this year's applications and the potential projects / schemes seeking funding.

Successful groups / projects will be notified in January 2013 of the outcome of their funding requests, following the convening of the Parish Challenge Panel and formal ratification by the Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement & Rural Affairs, Cllr Mrs Tricia Cowley.

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 £9,734
- 9.4 The current level of unallocated funds within the Ward Members Discretionary Budget is £5,900
- 9.5 The current level of unallocated funds within the former MoU Budget is £5,790
- 9.6 **Active Together - Breachwood Green**
Active Together Breachwood Green is a small constituted community group set up in March 2010 that coordinates sports & fitness activities for older adults within the local area of Breachwood Green and surrounding parishes.

The group is seeking support funding to help provide a 14 week programme of activities commencing in January 2013 providing two hour sessions on Friday mornings at Breachwood Green Village Hall. The sessions will be led by a qualified fitness instructor and include exercise circuits, stretches, resistance and seated exercises, badminton, table tennis, boules, indoor curling, rounders, hockey and quick cricket. The qualified fitness instructor will monitor and record the fitness levels of all those attending and ensure the sessions are safely delivered.

The scheme caters for all abilities and will assist in the promotion of well being, independent living and generally help improve the health of those attending. It is also expected that the sessions will provide a welcoming social environment thus, helping to combat both social exclusion & rural isolation that can often exist in the lives of older adults living in small villages throughout the district.

The group is seeking a grant award of £700 to help cover half the Hall Hire fees and Instructor costs. The total cost to deliver the 14 week programme is £1,400. The group has indicated that the £700 balance will be covered by the collection of session fees each week, local fundraising and the sale of refreshments. The programme will be advertised in the Breachwood Times, via the Parish Website and local posters & leaflets.

9.7 **Waste Not Want Not – New Site**

Over the past few months Members and Officers of the Authority have been aware of the pending crisis facing the Waste Not Want Not Group in the search for a new location to deliver an invaluable programme of activities and services to individuals and the wider community.

Officers have been advised that the group has finally found a new location, which is relatively local to the old site near Codicote. The group intends to apply for planning permission for some polytunnels and one or two likely wooden buildings to store tools and equipment, as well as serving as a rest and work area for volunteers.

They have had visits from Job Centre Plus who are keen to expand their partnership working with WNWN and taking advantage of increased work experience placements together with some apprenticeships.

They are also in contact with the HCC Young Offenders Team to recruit trainees and those officers responsible for young people on their discharge from care.

The costs of moving stock and equipment into store from the old site has been considerably expensive, which combined with the loss of sales and not being able to take on gardening projects whilst moving, has resulted in a drastic reduction in the group's revenue.

The new site requires some form of water supply, either via connection to the local main, or by installing a bore hole. The area also requires some perimeter fencing to make the site more secure, as well as the clearing two existing dropped kerb entrances and exits to allow better access to and from the site.

The group is seeking funds to assist with the works required at the new site and asks the Area Committee to consider a grant award to help cover the associated costs.

9.8 **Pirton Parish Plan – Publication**

The Community Development Manager has been assisting the Pirton Parish Plan group over the past year in the process of developing a Parish Plan for the village.

Following the major consultation element of the process carried out over the summer, all the resulting findings, comments and views have been recorded, drawn together and summarised into themed action plans for the village to work towards over the next 3 to 5 years.

The group is at the stage in the process where it wishes to formally produce and publish a final document that covers the whole process focusing on the views of the residents within the Village and the various objectives within the themed actions.

Initial quotes for such a document are between £1,500 and £1,700 for 600 full colour copies, allowing for 1 per household and a few spare for circulation to local agencies & organisations.

The group is seeking a funding award from the Area Committee to help cover a proportion of the printing costs.

The group is seeking assistance from the Parish Council as well as sponsorship from local trades and businesses within the village.

9.9 **Highways Matters**

It is proposed that a section entitled ‘ Highways Matters ‘ is included within the Area Champion’s News Report for each committee cycle to facilitate debate and enable appropriate feedback on any of the proposed or listed schemes.

Members attention is drawn to Appendix 4 Joint Funded Highways Schemes / Proposals Form which lists and tracks the progress of joint funded Highways schemes or proposals raised by the Committee.

New proposals will be logged on the form and forwarded to the respective Herts County Councillor for consideration.

9.10 **Ward Member Grants**

Members are to note that the following Ward Member Grants have been approved over the last month

Cllr Bardett

£250 – Knebworth Parish Council – Tree Works Programme

£300 – Knebworth Twinning Association

Cllr Jane Gray

£250 – Knebworth Parish Council – Tree Works Programme

Cllr Bishop

£400 – Kimpton Parish Council – Children’s Play Area Features

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 £700 to the Active Together Breachwood Green Scheme as outlined in section 9.6 of this report.

10.4 That the Committee considers awarding support funding of £1,500 in principle to the Waste Not Want Not new site project as outlined in section 9.7 of this report subject to planning conditions.

- 10.5 That the Committee considers awarding support funding of £500 to the Pirton Parish Plan Group as outlined in section 9.8 of this report.
- 10.6 That the Committee considers any new Highways proposals that it wishes to joint fund and to forward such schemes on to the respective County Councillor for consideration.

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 – Rural Grants Fund 2012/13 Applications Summary
- 12.4 Appendix 4 – Joint Funded Highways Projects / Proposals
- 12.5 Appendix 5 – Grant Form – Active Together Breachwood Green
- 12.6 Appendix 6 – Grant Form – Waste Not Want Not
- 12.7 Appendix 7 – Grant From – Pirton Parish Plan

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14. BACKGROUND PAPERS

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