

**SOUTHERN RURAL AREA COMMITTEE
THURSDAY 7 FEBRUARY 2013**

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

AGENDA ITEM No.

36

TITLE OF REPORT : CHAMPION NEWS & FINANCE REPORT

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF POLICY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 To advise the Committee of the activities and schemes with which the Community Development Officer has been involved.
- 1.2 To bring to the Committee's attention some important community based activities that will be taking place during the next few months.
- 1.3 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.
- 1.4 To advise the Committee on the current expenditure and balances of the Area Committee delegated budgets.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to note the activities and schemes with which the Community Development Officer has been involved.
- 2.2 The Committee is asked to note the budgetary expenditure, balances and carry forwards within the Area Committee Development Budget Spreadsheet attached as Appendix 1.
- 2.3 That the Committee considers awarding support funding to the Circles Community Café group as outlined in section 8.1 of this report.
- 2.4 That the Committee considers awarding support funding to the Knebworth Park Cricket Club as outlined in section 8.2 of this report.
- 2.5 That the Committee considers awarding support funding to Herts Police as outlined in section 8.3 of this report.
- 2.6 That the Committee considers awarding support funding to the Pirton Village Hall Management Committee as outlined in section 8.4 of this report.
- 2.7 That the Committee considers awarding support funding to Great Ashby Community Council as outlined in section 8.5 of this report.

- 2.8 That the Committee considers awarding support funding to Lilley Parish Council as outlined in sections 8.6 & 8.7 of this report.
- 2.9 That the Committee considers awarding support funding to Offley Parish Council as outlined in section 8.8 of this report.
- 2.10 That the Committee considers awarding support funding in relation to potential Highways schemes as discussed under section 8.11 of this report.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To ensure that the Committee are kept informed of the work of the Community Development Officer.
- 3.2 This report is intended 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.
- 3.3 The awarding of financial assistance to voluntary organisations and the use of discretionary spending allows the Committee to further the aims and Priorities of the Council.
- 3.4 Production of this report is a requirement of the 'Priorities for the District' in which the Community Development Officer is required to produce a formal report to the Area Committee 6 occasions per annum in line with the Civic Calendar.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 There are no alternative options being proposed other than those detailed within the text of this report. However in the course of debate at committee, Members may wish to comment and offer additional views on any of the items raised within this report.

5. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS

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

6. FORWARD PLAN

- 6.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key decision and has not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1 Members are asked to note the information detailed in Appendix 1 Area Committee Budget Spreadsheet, which relates to the Area Committee budget balances for the current financial year 2012/13.

- 7.2 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 budgets available to the Committee.
- 7.3 The current level of unallocated funds within the Committee's Development Budget is **£7,634**
- 7.4 The current level of unallocated funds within the Committee's MoU Budget is **£5,790**
- 7.5 The current level of unallocated funds within the Committee's Ward Member Budgets is **£4,150**
- 7.6 This report has been produced to keep Members informed of the work of the Community Development Officer for the Southern Rural Area.

8. PROJECT/ACTIVITY/SCHEME DETAILS

8.1 Circles Community Café

Circles Café Bar group Registered as a Community Interest Company in December 2011. It has 3 volunteers, formerly the Gt Ashby Community Centre Management Association café bar sub-group.

Community Interest Companies (CICS) are limited companies, with special additional features, created for the use of people who want to conduct a business or other activity for community benefit, and not purely for private advantage.

The Community Café is seen as an integral part of the life of the Community Centre but as a separate trading/business operation safeguarding the Community Centre. The rationale and business model for a community interest company was the most appropriate to run the café bar as a business for community benefit, not private advantage. Any profits or other surpluses will be used for community benefit, not going to shareholders.

The company's activities will provide benefit to the inhabitants of Great Ashby and the surrounding neighbourhood areas; all users or visitors to the Community Centre; and all visitors to the neighbourhood centre.

Activities & Related Benefit

- To provide a professional, welcoming, friendly, and fulfilling continental-style cafe bar.
- To provide a facility that is benefiting, enhancing and serving the local community.
- To fill the gap identified through a community survey in 2003 for a facility providing refreshments/bar facilities in a family friendly environment.

If the company makes any surplus it will be used for

- The benefit of Great Ashby and the wider community, and reinvestment in and the enhancement of 'The Coffee Shop'.
- The Company shall transfer annually a minimum of 50% of any profits or other surpluses generated by its activities to the Great Ashby Community Centre Management Association (GACCMA) for use for the benefit of the community in line with the aims and objectives of GACCMA.

All café equipment and furniture will normally be owned by GACCMA; supplies bought by Circles; branded as Circles; Circles will effectively 'rent' the space from the Community Centre, providing additional financial security in that regard.

Staff employed by Circles; currently exploring with North Herts College mutual benefits.

The CIC will be responsible for all day-to-day operational business matters to do with the café bar Manager employed who will report to the MD and the Board;

All decisions about premises and about some matters of availability will need to be approved by GACCMA, as sub-lessee of the Centre.

Circles are seeking financial support from the Area Committee to complete the fitting out of the café area with the Community Centre and to help with initial operating costs associated with the opening and trading first two months estimated at £24k in total.

This is split into two distinct sections:

Facility& Equipment Costs £13.5k

One Month's Operational Costs £10.5k

Proposed NHDC funding routes & Officer actions:

Peter Underwood (via instruction from the Chief Executive) has reopened links with Croudace and has been given consent by the developers for £13k of the original contributed funds to be released to the Gt Ashby Community Centre Management Association for Facility & Equipment Costs.

Stuart Izzard has worked up grant application papers with Owen Smith (Circles Trustee) for submission to:

- The Southern Rural Area Committee - £5k for operational costs
- The Rural Grants Fund - £5k for equipment and kitting out costs

Other funds to be sought by Circles Trustees:

Grant request to the Gt Ashby Community Council for £5k was heard at the meeting on 10th January 2013 and subsequently granted.

Possible funds via the SBC Ward Member Budgets representing the Stevenage areas of Gt Ashby.

Formalising the Kickstarter Funding process of local pledge giving; this is effectively inviting sufficient people via social media to contribute a very small donation each, (also known as 'crowd funding') which provides an interest free 'pot' to form start up funding, a very popular and successful way to fund small enterprise.

Clearly, if all these options realise an expected level of funding, then the project would be able to move forward with ease with potentially some excess funding. However, officers advice at this stage is for the Trustees to secure commitments upfront and perhaps have the benefit later on of not making a call on all the funds.

8.2 Knebworth Park Cricket Club

Knebworth Park Cricket Club needs to move from its current location to enable Knebworth House to expand its planned commercial activities. Replacement land has been made available which will enable the club to provide the amenities and playing facilities which are difficult to provide in its current location.

KPCC was formed in 1871 and is located to at the front of Knebworth House with access from Old Knebworth Lane. The Cricket Club has been there since 1920. The membership is currently in the region of 300 with 200 of those being Juniors under the age of 17.

The Club runs 6 Saturday Senior Teams, 2 Sunday teams and 13 Junior Teams. Two of these Junior teams are for Girls.

KPCC is very highly regarded within Hertfordshire and beyond where our Junior sides have a very good reputation. In the 2012 season, KPCC had 30 juniors (18 boys and 12 girls) playing representative cricket for Hertfordshire.

The current situation means that the Cricket Club does not have any option but to move. The alternative site being provided by Knebworth House is suitable for the Club's current and future requirements, but will require considerable groundwork and a the construction of a new clubhouse to complete the overall provision and to ensure stability and future sporting development.

Architects have been employed and a full ground survey has been completed. The Club has already expended £8,000 from its small reserves and is seeking financial assistance from the Area Committee to achieve an additional £14,000 to complete the feasibility plan stage of the process.

The following steps would then involve applications to external funding agencies for the development phases of the project. Community Development Officers have been advising the Club with regards to funding streams for the initial stages of the project and will endeavour to assist in identifying and securing appropriate funding for the development stages.

8.3 Herts Police – ATV for the Southern Rural Area

Inspector Daniel Lawrence is due to verbally present this item to the Area Committee on 7th February 2012 for consideration and comment, with the view of seeking financial support for the initiative.

In essence and with support from strategic partners, Inspector Lawrence proposes to procure an additional ATV (all terrain vehicle) for deployment in the North Herts CSP in support of the operational needs in the Southern Rural area, in support of the Rural Policing Strategy and in support of the wider policing needs of Hertfordshire Constabulary.

Since the Spring of 2012 East Herts SNT have had access to an for deployment in delivering policing to the Rural Community of East Herts CSP.

The ATV, similar to those used by gamekeepers on large estates, has returned some tangible and effective policing results within the rural areas of East Herts. There have also been significant non-tangible results being achieved in relation to reassurance from the community and general comment made from various internal and external sources in relation to the ability to cover large areas of previously difficult areas in the search for vulnerable / missing persons.

Inspector Lawrence is confident funding can be secured for the capital purchase on the ATV itself and is seeking financial support from strategic partners in the revenue related costs in operating the ATV.

These can be broken down into:-

- Specialised Training £156 per designated Officer
- Safety Equipment £600 per Officer
- Monthly Running Costs £109

The vehicle will be for the use of Southern Rural / Hitchin Rural Safer Neighbourhood Team, There will occasions due to a threat to life where the vehicle may be deployed to other areas of Hertfordshire. Similarly the other ATV assets from East Herts and North Herts Rural (Royston) may be deployed in the event of a threat to life in North Herts Rural (Hitchin) Pre-planned operational deployments may necessitate the use of the ATVs in support of Hertfordshire Constabulary. Their use is considered particularly important following the removal of the Herts Constabulary Helicopter due to funding reductions. Performance data will be provided to any interested parties in relation to the deployment of the ATV in the respective police areas (frequency to be agreed)

8.4 **Pirton Village Hall**

The Management Committee of the Village Hall wish to renew approximately 32m of the existing metal and wire perimeter fence to the rear of the village hall. They current fence is difficult to repair and currently causes a number of issues with the school and those using the footpath adjacent to the hall's ground.

They plan to install 1.8m high closed board timber fencing that has concrete posts and gravel boards along the lower part of the fence. The Management Committee have highlighted £516 within their current reserves, which can be committed to the project and are seeking the balance of the funds required from the Area Committee.

It is understood at the time of writing this report that the Parish Council has also been asked for some financial support toward this project; an update on this will be provided at the meeting.

8.5 **Great Ashby Community Council**

Great Ashby Community Council is currently working through the process of developing a Community Plan. Support funding is being sought to help with the printing for the consultation questionnaire.

The Council's working group has developed a six page questionnaire which will be delivered to each resident as part of the plan's consultation stage programmed between February and April 2013.

Information on the whole process and the ways in which people can give their feedback will be detailed on the Community Council's website, in GASBAG, the local press and posters / leaflets at the Community Centre & local shops.

8.6 **Lilley Parish Council**

Lilley Parish Council is renovating the outdoor children's play area which lies in the heart of the village. The Parish Council, with local volunteers have spent several months over the summer and autumn, cutting back over grown shrubs/trees and repairing and replacing vandalized fencing, gates and equipment.

The Parish Council is seeking funding assistance for the last stage of the project which involves the renewal of safety bark around the play equipment and laying of new landscape/weed block and securing that with approved staples.

8.7 **Lilley Parish Council**

Lilley Parish Council is coordinating community environmental works leading to the creation of a Jubilee Hedge and Tree Planting project situated in an to the north of the children's play area within the village.

The Parish initially received 150 mixed hedge whips from the Woodland Trust back in November 2012 and it has been offered another 150 whips. It plans to schedule a Hedge and Tree planting afternoon in late February, inviting local children and families to come and help.

The Parish would like to add some trees along the way of the hedge to improve the overall look and balance, but also to enable the children and families involved to take ownership in planting and looking after specific trees.

The grant application is for 6 trees, spiral tree guards and tree stakes.

8.8 **Offley Parish Council**

Details to follow

8.9 **Rural Grants Programme 2012/13 (Parish Challenge)**

On Tuesday 22nd January Members of the Parish Challenge Panel met to consider the grant applications made under this year's Rural Grant programme.

The panel received summary reports on all application requests seeking funding via the following funds -

- **The Environmental Improvement Fund** – grants up to £1,000
- **The Playground Fund** – grants up to £2,500
- **The Community Buildings Refurbishment Fund** – grants up to £4,000

27 separate grant recommendations were considered with a total value of £48k.

The successful groups / projects are to be notified in early February 2013 following formal ratification by the Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement & Rural Affairs, Cllr Mrs Tricia Cowley and the Head of Policy & Community Services, Liz Green.

The Panel also received updates on current PACIF funded projects that are still live and also details of the proposed new Capital Facilities Funding Scheme that is being prepared to go before Cabinet.

8.10 **Ward Member Grants**

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

Cllr Tricia Cowley

£400 – Ickleford Burial Ground – Tree Planting Programme

Cllr Bardett

£150 – Knebworth Link Up – Lunch Club

Cllr Jane Gray

£250 – Knebworth Link Up – Lunch Club

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. This is to ensure that communication remains effective following the demise of the previous Joint Member Panel for each district.

Any new proposals or revised schemes will be forwarded to the respective Herts County Councillor for consideration who will in turn report back and advise the Committee accordingly.

8.11 North Herts Association of Town, Parish & Community Councils

Members are advised that the next meeting of the NHATP&CC has been scheduled for 7.00pm on Wednesday 13th February 2013 and held in upstairs meeting room at Mrs Howard Hall., Letchworth.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 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.

9.2 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.

9.3 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.

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

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Members are asked to note the information detailed in Appendix 1 of the report, which relates to the Area Committee budget balances for the current financial year 2012/13.

10.2 The spreadsheet also details the pre-allocations carried forward from the previous financial year 2011/12 to the current financial year 2012/13.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no risk entries that have been recorded on Covalent, the Council's Performance & Risk system. Individual events should have their own risk assessments in place to mitigate any health and safety issues.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 The Equality Act 2010 came into force on the 1st October 2010, a major piece of legislation. The Act also created a new Public Sector Equality Duty, which came into force on the 5th April 2011. There is a General duty, described in 12.2, that public bodies must meet, underpinned by more specific duties which are designed to help meet them.
- 12.2 In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of its functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 12.3 The projects which comprise the Community Development Officers' workload, and area committee funding assigned to community projects are assessed to ensure that they are as inclusive as possible to members of the local community. The only deviation to this is where a minority group may specifically receive funding or allocation of resources to address a particular area of need or 'gap' in provision.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 As the recommendations made in this report do not constitute a public service contract, the measurement of 'social value' as required by the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 need not be applied, although equalities implications and opportunities are identified in the relevant section at paragraphs 12.

14. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1 There are no pertinent Human Resource implications associated with any items within this report.

15. APPENDICES

- 15.1 Appendix 1 - Area Committee Development Budget Spreadsheet.
- 15.2 Appendix 2 – Area Committee Work Programme 2012/13.
- 15.3 Appendix 3 – Grant Report for Circles Community Café Project
- 15.3 Appendix 4 – Grant Report for Knebworth Park Cricket Club Development Project
- 15.4 Appendix 5 – Grant Report for Herts Police Rural All Terrain Vehicle Project
- 15.5 Appendix 6 – Grant Report for Pirton Village Hall Perimeter Fencing Project
- 15.6 Appendix 7 – Grant Report for Gt Ashby Community Council Community Plan
- 15.7 Appendix 8 – Grant Report for Lilley Parish Council Play Area Project
- 15.8 Appendix 9 – Grant Report for Lilley Parish Council Hedging & Tree Planting
- 15.9 Appendix 10 - Grant Report for Lilley Parish Council – to follow

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17. BACKGROUND PAPERS

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