

**SOUTHERN RURAL AREA COMMITTEE  
THURSDAY 28 NOVEMBER 2013**

**\*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

**AGENDA ITEM No.**

**6**

**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 a funding award of £1,500 to help support the construction of a new Clubhouse facility for Knebworth Tennis Club as detailed in 8.1 of this report.
- 2.4 That the Committee considers a funding award to help support the provision of two Bus Shelters for Little Wymondley in conjunction with Herts Highways and Wymondley Parish Council as detailed in 8.2 of this report.
- 2.5 That the Committee considers a funding award of £1,000 to help support the extension of the Kitchen facilities at Pirton Sports & Social Club. as detailed in 8.3 of this report.

- 2.6 That the Committee considers a funding award of £500 to help support the provision of a new heating system at the Breachwood Green Youth Club facility as detailed in 8.4 of this report.
- 2.7 That the Committee considers awarding support funding in relation to any potential Highways schemes as proposed and discussed under section 8.8 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 2013/14
- 7.2 The spreadsheet also details pre-allocated sums carried forward from the previous financial year 2012/13 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 **£17,550**
- 7.4 The current level of unallocated funds within the Committee's MoU Budget is **£5,370**
- 7.5 The current level of unallocated funds within the Committee's Ward Member Budgets is **£4,751**
- 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 Knebworth Tennis Club - Replacement Tennis Club Facility**

In 2011 the old Tennis Club hut situated within the Knebworth Recreation Ground was burnt down in an arson attack. The club has been fund-raising extensively over the past two years and has secured almost enough funds to construct a high-quality replacement clubhouse.

Knebworth Tennis Club has been in existence for at least 45 years and it serves both Knebworth Village and surrounding towns and villages with some members coming from Hitchin and Stevenage. It's current membership is in the region of 160 with an age spread across the generations from 5 to 75 years of age.

The club is a friendly place with an emphasis on enjoying sociable and competitive tennis all year round. Unfortunately, being bereft of a clubhouse since the arson attack has somewhat restricted the club's activities and general atmosphere. Taking refreshments, sheltering from inclement weather, enhancing the safety of the environment for children and providing an environment likely to attract new members, are all reasons why a new facility is essential.

In order to make tennis at the site as accessible to everyone as possible, the club has operated on extraordinarily low annual membership fees: just £85 for adults and £40 for juniors. The Club provides free tennis coaching sessions by an LTA coach on 18 Friday evenings each year from April through to August for approximately 25-30 children and young people of 5 to 16 years of age.

A dedicated club committee and additional volunteers spend many voluntary hours each year running the club, handling everything from insurance to court cleaning and maintenance, the staging and hosting of internal and external club competitions, through to the provision of children's coaching sessions and facilities renewal.

The club is a friendly place and the emphasis is on enjoying sociable and competitive tennis all year round, with the added provision of coaching sessions available to all at varying times of the week and year.

The Club has estimates for the whole project in the region of £23,000. The Club hopes to commence building work very shortly as funds already secured total £21,500 which is sufficient to complete the "shell" building stage, but not the electrical, plumbing or fitting-out stage.

Current project funding derives from the following sources:-

Knebworth Village Trust - £11,000

Insurance claim - £6,000

Fundraising Activities within the Club eg Quiz nights, parties etc - £3,500

Herts CC Member's Ward Discretionary Grant (Cllr Thake) - £1,000

Club Members feel that a clubhouse is an essential element of operating club activities and that it would be under severe long-term threat if it did not succeed in rebuilding a new facility.

They see themselves as a community club, operated by local people for the local community. They host a tennis court open day at the Village Fete every year in June and have an open access policy to people from all sections of the community. They have worked in partnership with Knebworth School for many years to increase access to tennis for all children both at our courts and in school. Knebworth Parish Council and Knebworth Village Trust both support their work.

The Club feels that Tennis, in particular, is an extremely good medium for allowing old and young to participate in a leisure activity together and it would like to continue meeting the existing demand for more tennis and inspire more people to play at Knebworth and a new facility is vital in sustaining this the club for future years.

The Club is asking Members of the Area Committee to consider a grant award of £1,500 to help meet the total amount of funds required.

## 8.2 **Wymondley Parish Council – Bus Stop Shelters**

Unfortunately local services and facilities in the village are now somewhat limited with only The Bucks Head pub remaining. Therefore many non-driving residents living along Grimstone Road and Sicut Road leading onto Stevenage Road, have to catch the bus to Stevenage or Hitchin in order access many basic services.

It is widely recognised that many of the residents in question are most often elderly, or are mothers with young children. The Parish Council has reviewed a number of suggestions based around the fact that there are a lack of Bus Shelters on this well used route / service. During the winter, many residents are often seen waiting at unsheltered bus stops, at the mercy of the weather and It is the Parish Council's intention to provide two bus shelters:-

- one on Grimstone Road, at the top of the housing estate
- one on Stevenage Road, at the foot of the housing estate

The Parish Council hopes to respond to the need expressed by the members of the community. Residents have no choice in making such unavoidable journeys, using public transport, to access necessary shops and the Parish believes the project will provide the more vulnerable members of the community with a better experience and in more comfort, particularly in bad weather and during winter months.

The bus shelters are being provided by Herts County Council, via Daniel Tancock, Passenger Transport Infrastructure Manager, who provided the estimated cost of £7,500 per shelter. If possible, the shelters will be 'recycled', moved from other locations where they are no longer needed. Herts County Council has pledged to provide one of the two shelters and also bear any maintenance costs.

County Councillor Richard Thake has been involved in this project from the start. He has provided £1,000 from his Ward Member's Locality Budget. A £300 contribution has also been received from Cllr Sal Jarvis's Ward Member Budget 2011/12 and Wymondley Parish Council has been able to contribute £3,100 towards the cost of the second shelter.

The Parish Council is asking Members of the Area Committee to consider a grant award of £3,100 to match its financial commitment and help meet the total amount of funds required to implement this project with Herts Highways.

### 8.3 **Pirton Sports & Social Club – Kitchen Enhancements**

The Sports & Social Club wish to build a small extension to the existing Kitchen facilities to provide a serving hatch for use during events and to the users of the recreation ground when attending activities.

The Clubhouse has been in place for 40 years with numerous improvements being carried out to the building over the years. It is well maintained by the Sports and Social Club which is responsible for its upkeep under a licence from Pirton Parish Council.

Currently if there is a function in the bar area, the kitchen is unavailable for other sports clubs and groups to serve refreshments. Therefore by constructing an extension to the existing kitchen it would allow for more than one activity / sport to operate at any one time, with the main part of the kitchen still useable by those attending functions in the bar area.

The Sports facility is used by a wide number of groups and the current kitchen facilities are in constant use, especially between August and May, the main football season. The extension will allow the clubs to continue to provide a service directly to those taking part in activities outside whilst the main kitchen is being used inside.

The project will benefit current users, the wider community the residents and those using the area informally

The total cost of the project is estimated at £8,290 and a copy of the plans and quotation for the works are available.

Officers are seeking the possibility of unlocking some Planning Contributions to help part fund and overall costs.

The Club is asking Members of the Area Committee to consider a grant award of £1,000 to help meet the total amount of funds required.

#### 8.4 **Breachwood Green Youth Club – Heating System**

The boiler at the Breachwood Green Youth Hut has recently failed and is now beyond economic repair with full replacement costs likely to be in the region of £10,000.

The Youth Club has sought an alternative heating solution of electric wall heaters with timer and frost stat controls which can be obtained for around £1,100 including installation. At the time of writing this report additional quotes were being sought by the Parish Clerk and the hall currently remains without any adequate heating.

The Youth Club (a subsidiary of Kings Walden Parish Council) is asking the Members of the Area Committee to consider a grant award of £500 to help meet the total amount of funds required.

#### 8.5 **NHDC Rural Grants Fund 2013 update**

In brief the overall funding pot for this year's awards is in the region of £40,000 via three funding streams:-

- The Community Building Refurbishment Fund – Grants up to £3,000
- The Playground Fund – Grants up to £2,500
- The Environmental Improvement Fund – Grants up to £1,000

Officers are currently compiling report papers for the Member Parish Challenge (Rural Grants) Panel which has been scheduled to sit on Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> December 2013.

Early indications show that there are 30 separate valid applications spread across all three funds seeking a total of funds that is just within the funding budget available.

#### 8.6 **UU's / s106 Contributions & Funding Advice**

The CDM is liaising with the following Parishes re the potential unlocking collected UU contributions held by the Authority and in cases assisting to compile evidence of need within each community re any current and future developments. These are subject to meeting relevant criteria set under regulation and by which the Authority must abide.

**Ickleford** – Listing potential projects and gaps in current provision re future community need, including highlighted enhancement works at the Sports & Social Club.

**Pirton** – Looking at potential projects re the possibility of unlocking funds currently received as well as highlighting future areas of future community need, including Sports Pitch Floodlighting, the development of a Cinema facility at the Village Hall and the extension of the Sports & Social Club's Kitchen re provision of service directly to those using the Recreation Ground.

**Kings Walden** - Looking at the possibility of unlocking funds for Tennis Court refurbishment and the provision of a new Multi Use Games Area.

**Preston** - Looking at the possibility of unlocking funds for the Village Hall.

#### 8.7 **CDA Herts – Rural Housing Enabler, Sharon Oshunbiyi**

Members are advised that the CDA's Rural Housing Enabler, Sharon Oshunbiyi has asked if she could formally present at the Area Committee's meeting schedule for January, in order to brief the Committee on her role within the County and developments around future housing in Rural Areas.

Sharon has drafted out the short section below to help set the scene prior to her attendance in the New Year.

North Herts DC has formed a new partnership with 3 Registered Social Landlords, and CDA Herts to develop much needed housing in their rural areas.

The term affordable housing generally refers to low cost housing for shared ownership or rent, usually delivered through a housing association, to meet the needs of local people who cannot afford accommodation on the open market.

There has been some good progress made by CDA Herts to develop affordable rural housing within Hertfordshire following her employment in January 2013. Since then, CDA Herts have started working in partnership with Dacorum Borough Council, East Herts and North Herts District Council

The new partnership with North Herts is a positive step in addressing the need for housing in the rural areas of the District. The partnership should help to create a more seamless service, bringing together all vested interest groups to provide and build much needed affordable housing within rural communities..

#### **8.8 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.

For the longer term, consideration of how proposals are made, handled, prioritised and reported back are included in the scope of a Highways Task and Finish review by NHDC and relevant partners, which took place in late September 2013. The outcomes of that review, and any improvements recommended, will be reported back in due course through the council’s committee system, and of course to Area Committees.

### **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 1 of the Localism Act 2011 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 1<sup>st</sup> October 2010, a major piece of legislation. The Act also created a new Public Sector Equality Duty, which came into force on the 5<sup>th</sup> 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 2013/14.
- 15.2 Appendix 2 – Area Committee Work Programme 2013/14.
- 15.3 Appendix 3 – Area Committee Grant Form – Knebworth Tennis Club
- 15.4 Appendix 4 – Area Committee Grant Form – Wymondley Parish Council
- 15.5 Appendix 5 – Area Committee Grant Form – Pirton Sports & Social Club
- 15.6 Appendix 6 – Area Committee Grant Form – Breachwood Green Youth Club

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## **17. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

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