

SOUTHERN RURAL AREA COMMITTEE
23 January 2014

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

AGENDA ITEM No.

10

TITLE OF REPORT : CHAMPION NEWS AND 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 purchase of an electronic Scoreboard system for Ickleford Cricket Club as detailed in 8.1 of this report and Appendix 3.
- 2.4 That the Committee considers a funding award of £600 to help support the provision of new 9 'a' side Football Goalposts located at the recreation ground as detailed in 8.2 of this report and Appendix 4.
- 2.5 That the Committee considers the funding award of £1,500 to help support the construction of a new Clubhouse facility for Knebworth Tennis Club, which was heard by Members at the inquorate meeting of the Area Committee held on Thursday 28th November 2013 and deferred for Members consideration at the meeting of the Area Committee scheduled for January 2014. See Appendix 5 and 8.3.1 of this report.

2.6 That the Committee considers the funding award of £1,000 to help support the proposed improvement works to the Kitchen area within the Pirton Sports & Social Club facility, which was heard by Members at the inquorate meeting of the Area Committee held on Thursday 28th November 2013 and deferred for Members consideration at the meeting of the Area Committee scheduled for January 2014. See Appendix 6 and 8.3.3 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 8.6 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 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 **£15,050**
- 7.4 The current level of unallocated funds within the Committee's former 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 Ickleford Cricket Club – Electronic Scoreboard System

Ickleford Cricket Club is a fully constituted Club affiliated to the England & Wales Cricket Board through the Hertfordshire Cricket Board.

The Club's aims are:

- To foster & promote the sport of Cricket at all levels within the local community of Ickleford and North Herts, within the sport provision of opportunities for recreation, coaching and competition.
- To ensure that all members playing and non-playing, abide by the ECB Code of Conduct which incorporates the Spirit of Cricket and the Laws of Cricket.
- To ensure a duty of care to all members of the Club by adopting and implementing the ECB 'Safe Hands – Cricket's Policy for Safeguarding Children'.
- To ensure a duty of care to all members of the Club by adopting and implementing the DCB Cricket Equity Policy.
- To encourage all members to participate fully in the activities of the Club
- To work towards achieving Clubmark Accreditation.

Towards the end of last year's cricket season, the Club's old manual scoreboard was reaching the end of its natural life and a decision was made to try and raise funds over the winter months to replace it with a modern electronic equivalent.

Estimates have been submitted with the application indicating that the Club is looking to find in the region of £5,500 to cover all the associated cost required.

Costing Breakdown

- Main Scoreboard £4,402.80 inc VAT
- Repeater Balcony Board £418.80 inc VAT
- Build Costs – Full metal security cover for the Main Scoreboard est. £1,000

The Club has asked if Members would consider grant award of £3,000 to help achieve the funding required in the provision of a new Scoreboard System in advance of the 2014 Cricket Season. However, the applicant respects the current financial constraints facing the Authority and the many other groups in a similar situation and would be grateful to receive a level of award that Members felt appropriate. Under NHDC's current grants policy the maximum award which can be secured is £1,500.

8.2 Lilley Parish Council – Provision of 9 ‘a’ side Football Goalposts

Lilley Parish Council is aiming to encourage further sporting activities on and around the Parish Recreation Ground with football being one of the main sports under consideration.

Proposals have been drawn up to encourage younger and more senior members of the village and surrounding area to look at re-forming a Lilley Football Team / Club.

The Parish is seeking financial support from the Area Grants Budget available to the Committee in order to assist in the purchase of a pair of Nine ‘a’ side Football Goalposts and nets, of a type which would be totally secure with a locked crossbar.

The Parish’s overall aim is to promote health and welling activities locally within the village and it feels that this initiative would be a good example to kick things off.

The quoted cost of the Goals is £988 and the Parish has indicated that it would cover the £220 installation costs from its own budget, if the Members were minded to make an award for the provision of the goalposts & nets.

8.3 Grants from the meeting of the Area Committee held on 28th November 2013

8.3.1 Knebworth Tennis Club - Replacement Tennis Club Facility

At the last Area Committee Meeting held on 28th November 2013, Members present received a grant application presentation from John Harris and two junior members of the Tennis Club, Ollie Harris and Faye Amstutz.

The Members present were pleased that young people were being encouraged into sport through the Knebworth Tennis Club and were generally supportive of the grant application.

As funding was not required urgently the Chairman of the Area Committee requested that the application for grant funding be deferred to the next meeting of the Area Committee for consideration.

Summary of Application:

In 2011 the old Tennis Club hut situated within the Knebworth Recreation Ground was burnt down in an arson attack. Members of the club have been fund-raising extensively over the past two years and have 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 range spread across the generations from 5 to 75 years of age.

Club sessions have a friendly atmosphere 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 enjoyment. 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, 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 has estimates for the whole project to cost 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 CCllr Thake Member's Locality Discretionary Grant -	£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 has asked Members of the Area Committee to consider a grant award of **£1,500** to help meet the total amount of funds required.

8.3.2 Wymondley Parish Council & HCC Highways - Bus Stop Shelters Installation

At the last Area Committee Meeting held on 28th November 2013, Members present received a grant application presentation from Gil Seller, Chairman of Wymondley Parish Council, who presented the Parish Council's joint initiative with Herts Highways re the provision of 2 bus stop shelters for the village, which had originally been drawn to the attention of the Southern Rural Area Committee in March 2013.

Hertfordshire County Council, Highways would be undertaking the work, providing the bus shelters and paying for the maintenance costs and road improvements / adjustments and relevant traffic orders.

The project's total estimated costs would likely to be in the region of £17,000 of which County Councillor Richard Thake had provided £1,000 from his County Locality Budget, Councillor Sal Jarvis £300 from her Discretionary Ward Member Budget 2012/13 and Wymondley Parish Council would provide £3,100; officers are investigating if it were possible to utilise Planning Contributions of £1,200 currently collected for Wymondley under Sustainable Transport and will update at the meeting. Cllr Cathryn Henry had also indicated the commitment of funds from her Discretionary Ward Member Budget 2013/14 if required.

It was noted that Hertfordshire Highways may provide 'recycled shelters' ie. removed from use elsewhere, rather than new and therefore any grant funding should reflect the cost of the shelters.

The Members present at Area Committee's November meeting were supportive of the proposal that maximum grant funding of £2,500 matching the Parish Council's contribution (that estimated as being the original £3,100 offered, minus a contribution of planning contributions, which are as yet to be confirmed) should be awarded from the pre-allocated Highways Projects Budget, subject to the Planning Contributions being released and subject to advice as to whether recycled or new bus shelters would be provided.

As the Area Committee was inquorate that evening and not wishing to delay the initiative progressing any further, the Chairman requested that as a matter of urgency the funding award should be considered interregnum and under delegated powers by the Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement and Rural Affairs and the Strategic Director of Finance, Policy & Governance.

As a result of reviewing this item under the delegated decision process, it was agreed that whilst the maximum grant an Area Committee can generally award under the current grant policy was £1,500, this application should be supported to a maximum of £2,000. The reason for this sum being lower than that considered at the committee is that there remains a need to have oversight of a formal estimate.

It was therefore noted that a more detailed project plan needed to be provided and that no funds were to be released until there was greater clarity over whether recycled or new shelters were to be provided, on the basis that this would have a significant impact on the potential overall costs.

8.3.3 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 Parish Council is aware of the clubs proposals and is supportive.

At the last Area Committee Meeting held on 28th November, the Community Development Manager advised that Officers were also seeking the possibility of releasing S106 contributions to part fund the proposed works.

The Members present were supportive of the project and that grant funding of £1,000 be awarded towards the extension of kitchen facilities. As the Area Committee was inquorate that evening and not wishing to delay the initiative, determined as urgent by the presenters, progressing any further the Chairman requested that as a matter of urgency the funding award should be considered interregnum and under delegated powers by the Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement and Rural Affairs and the Strategic Director of Finance, Policy & Governance.

As a result of reviewing this item under the delegated decision process, it was agreed that the application should be referred back to the Area Committee to be considered by Members at the meeting scheduled for Thursday 23rd January 2013 following further clarification on support from the Parish Council and security. The grounds for urgency were reviewed, but it was considered that as the supporting documentation showed original estimates being sought in the summer of 2013, and that there is sufficient time prior to the commencement of the new football season for works to take place, it was more appropriate to refer this to members for consideration at the next formal meeting.

8.3.4 Breachwood Green Youth Club Facility – Heating System

Angela Hermann, Chairman of Kings Walden Parish Council, presented a grant funding request to the Area Committee for support in rectifying recent problems with the heating system at the local Youth Club venue.

She informed Members that the heating system in the Youth Club building had broken down and that they had received an estimate of £10,000 to replace the main boiler and it had therefore been decided to look at installing a system of 6 wall mounted 6kw electric heaters, which would cost in the region of £1,500.

The Members present at Area Committee's 28th November meeting were supportive of the proposal and that grant funding of £750 from budgets already allocated for Youth Activities could perhaps be utilised. However, as the Area Committee was inquorate that evening and not wishing to delay the initiative progressing any further, the Chairman requested that as a matter of urgency the funding award should be considered interregnum and under delegated powers by the Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement and Rural Affairs and the Strategic Director of Finance, Policy & Governance.

As a result of reviewing this item under the delegated decision process, it was agreed that a grant of £750 was appropriate, subject to the receipt and examination of quotations for the cost of the heaters, following which relevant funding will be released.

8.4 NHDC Rural Grants Fund 2013 Awards

A summary of this year's Rural Grant Awards is attached as Appendix 7.

8.5 UU's / s106 Contributions & Funding Advice

The CDM is liaising with a number of Parishes re the potential unlocking collected UU (Unilateral Undertakings) 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.

8.6 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 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 2013/14.
- 15.2 Appendix 2 – Area Committee Summary Update 2013/14.
- 15.3 Appendix 3 – Area Committee Grant Form – Ickleford Cricket Club.

- 15.4 Appendix 4 – Area Committee Grant Form – Lilley Parish Council.
- 15.5 Appendix 5 – Area Committee Grant Form - Knebworth Tennis Club.
- 15.6 Appendix 6 – Area Committee Grant Form – Pirton Sports & Social Club.
- 15.7 Appendix 7 – Summary of the NH Rural Grant Awards 2013 -14.

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17. BACKGROUND PAPERS

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