

**SOUTHERN RURAL COMMITTEE
12 MARCH 2015**

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

AGENDA ITEM No.

9

TITLE OF REPORT: COMMUNITY UPDATE AND GRANT APPLICATIONS

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF POLICY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

PORTFOLIO HOLDER – COUNCILLOR TONY HUNTER, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND RURAL AFFAIRS

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 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 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 grant award of £1,000 to assist Preston Parish Council address an extensive programme of tree maintenance works throughout the Parish and as detailed in Appendix 3 and 8.1 of this report.
- 2.4 That the Committee discusses and considers a request for further financial support to assist the John Clement's Centre Trust to finalise works to the facility, as detailed in Appendix 4 and 8.2 of this report.
- 2.5 That the Committee considers grant award of £500 to Pirton Summer Fair 2015 as detailed in Appendix 5 and 8.3 of this report.

- 2.6 That the Committee considers grant award of £1,500 to the Codicote Playground Support Group as detailed in Appendix 6 and 8.4 of this report.
- 2.7 That the Committee considers a grant award of £870 to Kings Walden Parish Council to improve facilities and access at the Multi Use Games Area as detailed in Appendix 7 and 8.5 of this report.
- 2.8 That the Committee considers a grant award of £700 to Preston Parish Council for the provision of a defibrillator as detailed in Appendix 8 and 8.6 of this report.
- 2.9 That the Committee considers a grant award of £500 to St Ippolyts Parish Council for essential tree works as detailed in Appendix 9 and 8.7 of this report.
- 2.10 That the Committee considers a grant award of £295 to Holwell Parish Council Provision of two litter bins as detailed in 8.8 of this report.
- 2.11 That the Committee considers a grant award of £200 to St Ippolyts Village Hall for Kitchen equipment as detailed in 8.8 of this report.
- 2.12 That the Committee considers a grant award of £100 to Pirton Parish Council for a Planting Scheme as detailed in 8.8 of this report.
- 2.13 That the Committee considers a grant award of £150 to Wymondley Parish Council for the Pavilion Project as detailed in 8.8 of this report.
- 2.14 That the Committee considers a grant award of £300 to Offley Parish Council for the provision of a new bench as detailed in 8.8 of this report.
- 2.15 That the Committee considers a grant award of £249 to Knebworth Parish Council for the provision of a new bench as detailed in 8.8 of this report.
- 2.16 That the Committee considers a grant award of £150 to Kings Walden Parish Council for a new bench at Breachwood Green as detailed in 8.8 of this report.
- 2.17 That the Committee considers a grant award of £200 to the Codicote Playground Support Group as detailed in 8.4 of this report.
- 2.18 That the Committee considers awarding support funding in relation to any potential Highways schemes as proposed and discussed under section 8.9 of this report.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To ensure that the Committee are kept informed of the work of the Community 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 policy.

- 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 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 rose 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 2014/15
- 7.2 The spreadsheet also details pre-allocated sums carried forward from the previous financial year 2013/14 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 **£6,235**
- 7.4 The current level of unallocated funds within the Committee's former MoU Budget is **£3,490**
- 7.5 The current level of unallocated funds within the Committee's Ward Member Budgets is **£5,400**
- 7.6 The current level of outstanding funds within the Committee's Preallocated Budget for Youth & Sport initiatives is **£1,717**

- 7.7 The current level of outstanding funds within the Committee's Preallocated Budget for Community initiatives is **£1,966**
- 7.8 The current level of outstanding funds within the Committee's Preallocated Budget for Parish Plans & Community Projects is **£2,218**
- 7.9 The current level of outstanding funds within the Committee's Preallocated Budget for Highways Projects is **£3,500**

8. PROJECT/ACTIVITY/SCHEME DETAILS

8.1 Preston Parish Council – Tree Works

Preston Parish Council has recently undertaken a survey of the trees within the parish. The work required is estimated at approximately £5,000 in total.

The highlighted work is required to ensure not only that the trees are safe, but also that they are in good condition and continue to live longer.

Trees within the Parish provide pleasure and enjoyment for both local residents and visitors. They are an important part of the environment and a key factor in the character of the village.

Being a small parish, this work is a considerable percentage of the Council's budget and the Parish is seeking a grant in the region of £1,000 to assist with taking on the required works.

8.2 John Clements Sports and Community Centre – Project Update

The building has been weather proof since just prior to Christmas, with all roofing, external doors and windows in place and floors screeded ready for final carpet and vinyl flooring

External scaffolding has being removed, all the electrical conduits and switches are now in place, ceilings are finished and plastered, plumbing is installed and internal doors have been fitted.

Internal painting is almost complete. Heating and lighting installation is now coming on and a start made to outside drainage, patio laying and surface preparation of the access road. Final floors should start to go down by the beginning of March and the project coordinator expects to have all utilities (water and electricity) linked up by early March.

The internal kitchen, bar and lounge areas will be constructed and fitted out in March along with the "buy a brick wall" in the lounge / bar area. Over 450 bricks have been purchased by Codicote residents, raising over £21,000 and with lots of community pride, enthusiasm and local ownership. The whole project is targeted to meet its scheduled early April completion date.

As the project has progressed the team has carefully monitored the cost of the building alongside efforts on fund raising. The team have secured the necessary funds to cover the basic cost of the building prior to the build start in mid-September and since then have been raising additional funds to upgrade the original specification in areas such as under floor heating, bar area construction and accessories, kitchen equipment, signage, patio and furnishings leading to a final funding gap down to £20-25,000 including the listed upgrades.

The site was visited and works inspected by Councillors Hone, Hunter, Cunningham, and Lovewell with Jane Gray on 11th February. County Cllrs Barnard and Thake visited with Tom Brindley on 5th February. The Leader of Council, Cllr Linda Needham also visited the site with Lady Valerie Dixon (one of the major funders) on 16th February.

Ward Member and Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Cllr Jane Gray organised a visit for Southern Rural Councillors on 25th February and at the time of writing this report it is understood that Councillors Strong, Henry, Hemingway and Jarvis are also due to visit the site and view the progress made to date and also get an understanding of what remains to be achieved / funded.

Visits have also been made by key local funders and all the 'buy a bricks' have been invited to visit on 21st & 28th February.

It is understood that all visitors have been extremely impressed with works thus far, passing on positive comments to the project team having had the chance to see exactly what the building is like, where the money has been spent and the quality of work done by a local Hitchin building company, MP Building and local architect, AT4 Architects.

The project team wholly values and acknowledges the Committee's support thus far and now seeks Members consideration re further financial support that may be available to the Area Committee or within the Authority in order to help complete the remaining works.

Members should note that the project presented to the 25th September 2014 SR meeting, when following debate and consideration of two funding proposals, the sum of £10k was awarded. Extract of minutes and resolutions as follows;

Members debated that one option could be to fund specific items such as the Kitchen. Members considered that £20,000 was too much for one project as the Committee needed to consider that further grant applications would be received from other organisations during the rest of the year.

It was proposed and seconded that £5,000 be awarded, with the option for the applicant to request further funding at a later stage in the project. It was also proposed and seconded that £10,000 be awarded.

Upon a vote it was

Resolved:

- (1) That the progress to date toward the provision of a new sports and community facility for Codicote be noted;

That grant funding of £10,000 be allocated to John Clements Centre from the 2014-2015 Discretionary Budget, as a contribution towards the fitting out of a new sports and social centre in Codicote.

When considering further funding at this stage, members should do so mindful that;

- Officers are still to receive a revised schedule of build costs in order to provide a suitable audit trail evidencing the degree to which the project falls short of its overall cost; this will also confirm that all other funders have contributed the sums to which they have committed previously
- Itemised schedule to show areas still to complete, as the committee may wish to fund one or more 'items' (as per discussion in September 2014) rather than provide the sum requested
- Other projects and potential applications are already under development within the village, including renewal of four play areas (playground scheme application for consideration separately this evening)
- An area committee can only recommend expenditure within the extent of the discretionary budgets devolved to it by Council and thus cannot take any decision which could incur additional cost on the Authority. Were the committee minded to seek additional funding toward this project, then the committee would need to refer the request to the relevant portfolio holder or Cabinet for consideration; in consideration of any such referral, the information referred to within this section would also need to inform any decision by the authority.

8.3 Pirton Summer Fair

The Pirton Summer Fair is run by Pirton Sports and Social Club. As well as providing a day of activities and entertainment for all the village community, it is also an important fund raising event for the Sports and Social Club and goes towards the annual running costs including the provision of other community events.

In addition, the Summer Fair supports other groups within Pirton, both by allowing them free information/fund raising stalls at the Fair and also by direct support.

The Fair has been running along the same lines for several years and amongst the comments post event last year was a request for more activities for children and that some of the games and rides at the fair were expensive.

The group would very much like to be able to offer more free activities and workshops and hopefully introduce local residents to new projects. The coordinating group would like to provide a circus skills workshop and a funfair ride, which would be fully funded by the Fair with no participation costs

The group would also like to have an official opening and to this end have made an enquiry with Garden City Samba (GCS) for a parade with dancers. GCS would also offer a "come and try" workshop.

The costs of these elements would come in at around £750

- Circus Workshop £250
- Fun Fair ride £350
- Garden City Samba performance & workshop £175

The group is seeking a grant award of £500 with the balance of funding required achieved by direct sponsorship.

The Area Committee's support towards this year's Summer Fair will allow the group to achieve its aims of enhancing the provision of varied activities which are not otherwise available in the local community.

8.4 Codicote Playground Support Group

The Codicote Playground Support Group is a charitable community project created to renovate the village playgrounds, namely the recreation field on St Albans Road and the small play area which lies between Newtown and Valley Road. The group was formed in October 2014 and currently has 9 committee members, volunteering their time and efforts to this much needed project as well as 36 additional community members who have signed up to pledge their support and willingness to help with the project where they can. The group is currently working towards obtaining charity status.

Owing to only minimal investment over years, the play equipment in the community recreation areas has slowly deteriorated and is now beyond economic repair.

The group are working to involve the whole community in all aspects of the project from designing possible enhancement schemes, raising funds all the way through to implementation.

The group is working very closely with Codicote Parish Council to ensure that any preferred schemes not only meet the needs of the residents but that the resulting provision is sustainable with regards to the ongoing maintenance costs and general upkeep of any new equipment installed.

Over the last five months the group have been actively seeking community views, opinions and concerns to ensure that they carefully consider the most appropriate options, while simultaneously seeking numerous quotes from playground suppliers and exploring potential funding options.

On the 30th January 2015 they held an extremely successful open community consultation session at Bodycote Primary School where preliminary designs and plans were displayed for people (adults & children) to have the opportunity to meet the team and pass comment / preferences on the indicative scheme on show.

All attending were asked to complete a questionnaire about the designs to formally let the group know about their ideas, thoughts and concerns. The event also doubled up as their first 'fundraiser' selling cakes and refreshments as well as holding a competition for the children to draw their favourite things to play on in the park. As a result the consultation was very well attended and provided some very valuable feedback on how best to ensure that any schemes emerging provide a challenging and fun play environment for the community.

On Tuesday 17th February 2015 the group presented a preliminary proposal to the Codicote Parish Council Recreational Committee meeting and as a result the group have taken on board comments raised and adjusted the provisional designs accordingly.

A follow-up update was then made at the Full Codicote Parish Council Meeting on Tuesday the 24th of February and again the group has taken on board concerns from local residents and the Parish Council.

As a result the group has scaled back aspects of their provisional plans in order to address worries about noise issues that might arise from attracting teenagers in the evening (namely a picnic shelter and zip wire). The group has agreed to set these aspects of the project aside for the time being and will revisit them by way of discussion at a later date to avoid unnecessary delays to the urgently needed renovations on the other aspects of the project.

It is planned over time to work with all parties to find solutions to balance the needs and concerns of the immediate residents and the needs of the village and greater community.

The group plans to host local level fundraising events throughout the course of the project such as running cake sales, Village Day stalls, fitness fundraisers and a Gala Dinner evening with some fantastic operatic entertainment.

They also plan to approach various grant providers such as Biffa, Awards for All, Luton Airport Community Fund and Hertfordshire Police to help raise the much needed funds.

The group acknowledges that with financial help from such organisations, as well as any funds the Area Committee and Authority may wish to consider that this project will provide the parish of Codicote with essential public amenities which are currently in need of desperate attention and enhancement.

8.5 **Kings Walden Parish Council - MUGA enhancements**

Kings Walden Parish Council wishes to continue the enhancements to the Multi Use Games Area at Breachwood Green by addressing some vital works to improve overall access to the facility.

Estimated costs to works to the access path and associated lighting have been returned at £4,170.

Breakdown of funds / grants required

Parish Council commitment	£1,200
HCC Cllr Barnard Locality Budget	£1,500
Highlighted s106/UUs	£ 600

Grant Award being sought from the Area Committee £870

8.6 Preston Parish Council – Defibrillator

Preston Parish Council would like to install a defibrillator at a central point within the village.

Like other rural parishes / villages in the Southern Rural area of North Herts, the Parish Council is aware that Preston village is one of the furthest away from an ambulance station.

Such provision has the potential to be a life-saving initiative for local residents and also for the many visitors to the area for leisure purposes.

Plans are to locate it outside the village pub for easy access around the clock twenty four hours a day all year round.

The Parish is seeking a grant in the region of £895 to assist with the total cost for provision of £1,395.

8.7 St Ippolyts Parish Council – Tree Works

St Ippolyts Parish Council has recently undertaken a survey of the trees within the parish. The work required is estimated at approximately £3,000 in total.

The highlighted work is required to ensure not only that the trees are safe, but also that they are in good condition and continue to live longer.

Trees within the Parish provide pleasure and enjoyment for both local residents and visitors. They are an important part of the environment and a key factor in the character of the village.

Being a small parish, this work is a considerable percentage of the Council's budget and the Parish is seeking a grant in the region of £500 to assist with taking on the required works.

8.8 Ward Grants

Holwell Parish Council	Provision of 2 litter bins	£295
St Ippolyts Village Hall	Kitchen equipment	£200
Pirton Parish Council	Planting Scheme	£100
Wymondley Parish Council	Pavilion Project	£150
Offley Parish Council	New Bench	£300
Knebworth Parish Council	New Bench	£249
Kings Walden PC	New Bench at Breachwood Green	£150

8.9 **Highways Matters**

This section is included within the community update report for each committee cycle to facilitate debate and enable appropriate feedback on any of the proposed or listed Highways related schemes.

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.

8.10 **UU's / s106 Contributions & Funding Advice**

The CDM is liaising with a number of Parishes re the potential unlocking of 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.

8.11 **Rural Grants Programme 2014/15**

Please see Appendix 10 – Summary of Rural Grant Awards 2014/15

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 include discretionary grant 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 2014/15.

10.2 The spreadsheet also details the pre-allocations carried forward from the previous financial year 2013/14 to the current financial year 2014/15.

10.3 In the past few years there has been no inflationary allowance to the Area Committee Budgets and the 2014/15 baseline budget has stayed the same as the previous year.

- 10.4 The former MoU Budget is subject to a 7.1% reduction each year through to financial year 2015/16.

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 2014/15.
- 15.2 Appendix 2 – Area Committee Summary Update 2014/15.
- 15.3 Appendix 3 – Area Committee Grant Form – Preston Parish Council – Tree Works

- 15.4 Appendix 4 – Area Committee Grant Form – John Clements Centre Trust
- 15.5 Appendix 5 – Area Committee Grant Form – Pirton Summer Fair
- 15.6 Appendix 6 – Area Committee Grant Form – Codicote Playground Support Group
- 15.7 Appendix 7– Area Committee Grant Form – Kings Walden Parish Council
- 15.8 Appendix 8 – Area Committee Grant Form – Preston Parish Council
- 15.9 Appendix 9 – Area Committee Grant Form – St Ippolyts Parish Council
- 15.10 Appendix 10 – Summary of Rural Grants Awards 2014/15

16. CONTACT OFFICERS

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17. BACKGROUND PAPERS

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