

SOUTHERN RURAL COMMITTEE
11 JUNE 2015

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

AGENDA ITEM No.

8

TITLE OF REPORT: COMMUNITY UPDATE AND GRANT APPLICATIONS

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF POLICY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

PORTFOLIO HOLDER – COUNCILLOR TONY HUNTER

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 To advise the Committee on the current expenditure and balances of the Area Committee delegated budgets.
- 1.2 To bring to the Committee's attention details of recent requests received for Area Committee Grant Funding made by community groups and local organisations.
- 1.3 To advise the Committee of the activities and schemes with which the Community Officer has been involved.
- 1.4 To bring to the Committee's attention some important community based activities that will take place during the next few months.
- 1.5 To advise the Committee of progress in regard to the ongoing Grants Policy review, and any changes, already agreed, which will come into place from this meeting onwards.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to note the budgetary expenditure, balances and carry forwards within the Area Committee Development Budget Spreadsheet attached as Appendix 1.
- 2.2 That the Committee notes and agrees the deduction of £1,300 from the Area Committee's budget to enable sufficient budget to provide a pot from which to fund districtwide organisations **for financial year 2015/16 only** (see para 7.6) pending the outcome of the authority's Grants review.
- 2.3 That the Committee considers a Cadwell Ward Budget 2014/15 grant award of £155 to assist Ickleford Parish Council address a 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 considers a Chesfield Ward Budget 2014/15 & 2015/16 grant award of £300 to assist Gt Ashby Community Centre Management Association with costs relating to the construction of an external Buggy / Pushchair Shelter, as detailed in Appendix 4 and 8.2 of this report.

- 2.5 That the Committee considers a Knebworth Ward Budget 2014/15 grant award of £250 to assist Knebworth Parish Council address costs associated to the installation of pedestrian handrails in New Close, as detailed in Appendix 5 and 8.3 of this report.
- 2.6 That the Committee considers a Knebworth Ward Budget 2014/15 grant award of £200 to assist Knebworth Parish Council with costs relating to the provision of a new website for the parish as detailed in Appendix 6 and 8.4 of this report.
- 2.6 The Committee is asked to note the activities and schemes with which the Community Officer has been involved.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 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.
- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 To ensure that the Committee are kept informed of the work of the Community Officer.

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 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 2015/16
- 7.2 The spreadsheet also details pre-allocated sums carried forward from the previous financial year 2014/15 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 **£26,310**
- 7.4 The current level of unallocated funds within the Committee's Ward Member Budgets is **£7,000**
- 7.5 The current level of outstanding funds within the Committee's Preallocated Development Budget carried forward from 2014/15 for Community Projects is **£3,256**
- 7.6 Members should note that one of the recommendations arising from the Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish Group on the Council's grant making process (July 2013) was that a 'district wide pot' should be established in order to enable payments to be made to applicants whose project covered the whole of North Herts, without need to present and apply to each of the Council's five area committees; on further consideration, the Task and Finish Group considered, in their report back to Cabinet in July 2013, that achieving such a pot by removing money from area committees may not be the most appropriate, but that the Head of Policy and Community Services be tasked with considering this issue as part of the grants review.

In the process of the overall grants policy review to date, the Head of Policy and Community Service has highlighted not only that multiple applications to area committees is resource intensive for both applicant and Council officers/administrative costs but nor does it accord with the Council's Constitution in regard to area committees, which states at 9.8.2 community (h);

- (h) To establish and maintain relationships with outside bodies/voluntary organisations operating specifically within the area including, where appropriate, the provision of discretionary grant aid/financial support etc. **but excluding grants for district-wide activities (as determined by the Head of Policy and Community Services).**

It has therefore been agreed in discussion with the Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement and Rural Affairs that a small budget of £6.1k be established **for the financial year 2015/16 only**, by reducing each area committee grant by a proportionate amount toward this districtwide budget. The relevant amounts to be deducted from each area committee budget are as follows;

Area Committee	£
Baldock	700
Hitchin	1,600
Letchworth	1,600
Royston	900
Southern Rural	1,300
Total	£6,100

Awards from the budget will be made under existing delegations, following discussion with the portfolio holder for Community Engagement and Rural Affairs. Applications received will be included within this report to area committees, and the decision notice published thereafter in the Members Information Service.

This is only intended to be an interim measure, as there are no alternative budgets available from which to create a districtwide pot. Once the review of Major Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and grant process is completed shortly, then the way in which all districtwide activities are funded can be considered and agreed together.

8. PROJECT/ACTIVITY/SCHEME DETAILS

8.1 Ward Grant Application - Ickleford Parish Council re Tree Works

The Parish is seeking funding of £155 from the Cadwell Ward Budget 2014/15 towards a total project cost of £580 to remove a conifer hedge. Following on from consultation with residents in Boswell Drive, Ickleford, the Parish Council has arranged for a tree specialist company to remove a conifer hedge on a communal grassed area along the road, as it has become overgrown and is encroaching on the grassed area.

Once the hedge has been removed, the Parish Council will cover the area with topsoil in order to reseed back to grass. The Parish Council will be paying £390 for the conifer hedge to be removed and then £191 for the topsoil.

The Area Committee may wish to note that the Parish Council is a precepting body which has the power to raise funds for such projects in its own right.

8.2 Ward Grant Application – Gt Ashby Community Centre Management Association re External Pushchair / Buggy Shelter

The success of the existing parent-and-toddler groups in the Community Centre has led to safety issues around the number of buggies and pushchairs being left inside the building blocking corridors and access points.

The Management Association plans to provide a covered shelter outside that would significantly alleviate this difficulty. Total costs are estimated to be in the region of £3,585 and the Management Association is seeking a total grant of £300.

It is proposed that this figure would be made up by drawing £100 from the Chesfield Ward Budget 2014/15 and a further £200 from this year's Ward Budget. The application is supported by the Great Ashby Community Council which has agreed to make up the difference.

8.3 Ward Grant Application – Knebworth PC re Pedestrian Handrails, New Close

The Parish Council plans to install new pedestrian handrails on the steps to the footpath from New Close to Stevenage Road. The steps are quite wide and elderly residents in New Close have requested the handrail to steady themselves.

Part of the land is owned by Highways and Ringway have been lined up to install the rails. Initial estimate for the works is £1,000 and the Parish Council is seeking a grant contribution of £250 from the Knebworth Ward Budget 2014/15. Further funds to make up the balance required will be derived via County Councillor Thake's Locality Budget and the Parish's own funds.

The Area Committee may wish to note that the Parish Council is a precepting body which has the power to raise funds for such projects in its own right.

8.4 **Ward Grant Application – Knebworth PC – New Website**

The Parish Council is seeking financial support of £200 from the Knebworth Ward Budget 2014/15 to assist with the design and construction costs relating to a new Parish Council website which will be launched at the beginning of June.

The set up and first year support costs are £1,250 and the new website will be more informative, user friendly and designed to meet current legislation requirements. Funds to make up the balance required will be derived via the Parish Council's own funds.

The Area Committee may wish to note that the Parish Council is a precepting body which has the power to raise funds for such projects in its own right.

8.5 **Graveley Pre School – Play Area Enhancements**

The CM has given advice and initial assistance to Karen Hooper from the Pre School group re enhancing the existing external play area at Graveley Village Hall. The group operates every weekday morning providing essential child care services to families from within the Parish and immediate surrounding areas.

A site meeting with Graham Phillips from Groundwork has occurred with the view of the Trust's Green Team taking on the redesigning of the area and then hopefully undertaking the enhancement works.

It is likely that Groundwork will help secure part of the external funding required to take on such works, but the group may seek financial support from this Committee in the near future.

8.6 **BBC 'Get Creative' - Rural Schools, Pottery & Ceramics Project**

Get Creative is a campaign led by the BBC and What Next? in partnership with a huge range of arts, cultural and voluntary organisations across the UK.

Get Creative is organised by the BBC with What Next?, a movement bringing together arts and cultural organisations from across the UK, to articulate and strengthen the role of culture in our society.

It is hoped that millions of everyday artists will want to share their creativity with those currently involved and those who don't yet already take part in some form of art or craft.

Get Creative is a year long project and started in February 2015 with a national conversation about the value of culture and creativity.

The first and pilot activity linking to the Get Creative initiative within North Herts is the Rural Schools Ceramics & Pottery Project, which has already started and involves a local ceramics artist working with children from a number of rurally located primary schools within the District.

Barley school has already had a workshop session with local ceramics artist Vanessa Cox-Pendray, where 38 Children created clay tiles to give to their mothers for Mother's Day. The school held a 'Mother's Day - Afternoon Tea' on Wednesday 11th March attended by Cllr Tony Hunter, Portfolio Holder of Community Engagement & Rural Affairs, to help promote local creativity and show support for the Get Creative BBC Arts initiative within North Herts.

Further rural schools have joined the scheme including Reed village school, where 41 children created 3D clay images of their own faces, which will be permanently displayed within the school.

A series of further sessions in the Southern Rural area will have taken place by the time the Committee meet:

- Four after school sessions at St Pauls Walden village school commencing on Tuesday 28th April 2015
- And two sessions at Breachwood Green village school on 18th & 22nd May 2015.

8.7 Kimpton Folk Festival 2016

Via a referral from the Member for Kimpton, Cllr Bishop, the CM is assisting a group of local residents within the village, in developing plans to stage a Folk Festival next summer. At the time of drafting this report the CM had planned to meet with the organisers of the proposed event with the possibility of working up a funding application to come before this Committee later in the year.

8.8 Offley Recreation Ground – Additional & Enhanced Facility Provision

At the time of drafting this report the CM with Steve Geach, the Authority's Parks & Countryside Development Officer had planned to meet with David Sample the Parish Clerk on Wednesday 13th May 2015 to help develop proposals for additional and enhanced facilities at the Recreation Ground. Discussions will focus on the potential utilisation of section 106 contributions derived from the Croudace development area within the village.

8.9 Kimpton Tennis Club – Pavilion

Via a referral from the Member for Kimpton, Cllr Bishop, the CM is assisting members of the Tennis Club, in developing plans for a new Clubhouse.

The original clubhouse is a timber frame build and has provided a great focal point for the club for the last 35 years. While it has served the club faithfully it no longer meets the clubs requirements and needs increased maintenance and repair year on year.

The club wishes to provide a modernised clubhouse that will serve as a revived focal point and assist the club's ambition in increasing youth participation in tennis from within the community for the future.

Those in the Kimpton Parish community have limited options for travelling to facilities outside the village. It is not well served by public transport, with only four routes running through the village (most Monday to Friday only) and no buses later than 6.15pm. Alternative travel costs to urban leisure facilities such as sports & leisure centres are too high for some local parents. They are therefore dependent on facilities within the parish to provide healthy and safe activities and environments for local young people to get involved.

The new clubhouse will provide:

- A revived focal point for tennis/ community activities in the village
- Promotion of a healthy outdoor lifestyle for not only children and youths as envisioned in the Parish Plan but also for adults in the village
- A safe, secure and 'fit for purpose' facility for youth community groups/ village organisations/ clubs such as the Guides, Scouts and church groups etc. to get involved in outdoor activities (FOC)
- Improved weatherproof facilities to aid maintenance of players fitness during inclement months
- Additional storage to enable the expansion of tennis coaching programmes to all in the community

The Kimpton Tennis Club has for the past 35 years been a valued resource, hub and community focal point for many in the village and surrounding area. The club's participation in area competitions has promoted the village and its community values around the county and beyond and has continued to adopt, integrate and instil good core values into the next generations of tennis players from children to young people through to adults.

Moving forward the club is keen to continue and extend its training and coaching programmes to involve more young generations and as such requires a clubhouse that is safe, secure and of a standard that can provide these initiatives for future generations.

The club is actively engaged in raising funds on its own behalf through various events and community activities and has already raised a substantial amount toward the cost of the new clubhouse.

The CM will work with those at the club to help with applications to appropriate funding streams which may include a funding application to the Council via the Rural Grants Programme or this Committee.

8.10 **Pirton Skate Park**

The CM has given advice and initial assistance to Pirton Parish Cllr Leila Lauder re possible sources of external funding re this potential project.

The Parish has recognised that there is a desire amongst young people in the village to have a skate park accommodated on the MUGA. As a result they have met with Marcus Reader from Urban Ramps re the proposed site with estimate costs coming back at approximately £15,000 for four pieces of equipment and a further £15,000 for the concrete base.

The Parish Council is considering a number of funding routes available which may include a funding application to the Council via the Rural Grants Programme or this Committee.

8.11 **St Ippolyts – Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group**

The CM and two Officers from the Authority's Planning Policy team attended the first meeting of the newly formed St Ippolyts Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group on Tuesday 5th May 2015.

The group formally adopted a set of proposed Terms of Reference and will periodically report back to the Parish Council advising on matters relating to the process involved in the creation of a neighbourhood plan.

The group received initial advice and direction from officers re the Neighbourhood Plan process and the synergies aligned to the Authority's Local Plan. The group also received an update from a representative on the Pirton Neighbourhood Plan Group who gave a practical approach on how the process has unfolded in Pirton over the past 18 months.

From initial discussions at the meeting it is likely that the group will be seeking a significant amount of grant funding via Locality Ltd, with the possibility of bringing a funding application before this Committee to assist with the evidence gathering and consultation elements early within the process.

8.12 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.

8.13 UU's / s106 Contributions & Funding Advice

The CM 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.

8.14 Rural Grants Programme 2015/16 – Parish Challenge Launch

As in previous years, the Parish Challenge Funding Programmes will be launched towards the end of May.

All Parish Councils, Meetings and other eligible village based organisations / groups will be notified of the three funding Programmes and the timescales to apply.

See Appendix 7 - Rural Grants Fund 2015/16 – *A Quick Guide*

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 **as a body** has delegated powers to administer funds from the budgets described. Whilst individual ward members may comment on and support (or not) any grant application put before the committee, the decision to award is afforded only to the Southern Rural Area Committee itself under the Council's Constitution and provided such committee is quorate at the time of such decision.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 In the past few years there has been no inflationary allowance to the main Area Committee Budget and the 2015/16 baseline budget has stayed the same as the previous year.
- 10.2 Appendix 1 provides details of the 2015/16 budget position for the Area Committee.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 There are no relevant 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. There are no pertinent risk implications for the Authority associated with any items within this report.

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 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 2015/16.
- 15.2 Appendix 2 – Area Committee Summary Update 2015/16.
- 15.3 Appendix 3 – Ward Grant Form – Ickleford PC – Tree Works
- 15.4 Appendix 4 – Ward Grant Form – GACCMA – External Buggy / Pushchair Shelter
- 15.5 Appendix 5 – Ward Grant Form – Knebworth PC – Pedestrian Handrails, New Close
- 15.6 Appendix 6 – Ward Grant Form – Knebworth PC – New Website
- 15.7 Appendix 7 - See Appendix - Rural Grants Fund 2015/16 – *A Quick Guide*

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17. BACKGROUND PAPERS

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