

**SOUTHERN RURAL COMMITTEE
1 DECEMBER 2016**

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

AGENDA ITEM No.

6

TITLE OF REPORT: COMMUNITY UPDATE AND GRANT APPLICATIONS

REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC DIRECTOR FINANCE, POLICY & GOVERNANCE

EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND RURAL AFFAIRS,
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.

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 considers a grant award of £500 to Offley Village Hall to assist with the costs of replacing the Hall's chairs, as detailed in Appendix 2 and 8.1 of this report.
- 2.3 That the Committee considers a grant award of £735 to the Dacre Rooms, Kimpton to assist with the costs of refurbishing the building as detailed in Appendix 3 and 8.2 of this report.
- 2.4 That the Committee considers a grant award of £300 to Small Acts of Kindness CIC to assist with costs of sourcing and distributing Warm in Winter Gift Bags to older people living in North Herts, as detailed in Appendix 4 and 8.3 of this report.
- 2.5 That the Committee approves the allocation of £100 within the Chesfield Ward Budget 2015/16 to be assigned to future Youth Initiatives within the ward.
- 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 expressed in the Corporate Plan.
- 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 RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 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 2016/17.
- 7.2 The spreadsheet also details pre-allocated sums carried forward from the previous financial year 2015/16 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 for 2016/17 is **£8,606**
- 7.4 The current level of unallocated within the Committee's Ward Members 2016/17 Budget is **£5,000**

8. PROJECT/ACTIVITY/SCHEME DETAILS

8.1 Offley Village Hall

The Village Hall Committee is seeking a grant award of £500 from the Committee's Main Budget to assist in the provision of new chairs for use at the Hall.

The committee wishes to replace the Hall's old chairs which are sadly coming to the end of their useable life, with new lighter stackable chairs.

The estimated cost to replace all 80 chairs is in the region of £5k and a separate sub committee, 'the Friends of Great Offley Group' has already raised £1,200 and is holding other fundraising social events running up to Christmas to obtain additional funds..

As a result it is likely that with the Committee's support, they may be able to replace the first 40 chairs early in the New Year.

Unlike the Parish Council, the group which has Charity status isn't in the position to reclaim the 20% VAT on such items, although the Parish Clerk is assisting where possible to achieve the best price.

8.2 Dacre Rooms, Kimpton

The Dacre Rooms were given to the village 130 years ago by Lady Dacre. Up until a few years ago they had been regularly used by the village youth club, but this closed and the building fell into disuse.

The village was therefore consulted about its possible future and subsequently a small team volunteers was formed charged with revitalising the rooms and getting them back into various forms of community use.

As a result, the rooms now have regular bookings:-

- Coffee mornings - 3 per month
- Farmer's markets - monthly
- Music teaching - twice a week
- Yoga- weekly
- Plus social evenings, food evenings, parties etc.

The regular bookings now more than cover the buildings running costs and the group has attracted grants / external funding in the region of £10K to date.

These funds have been utilised to:-

- Replace the boiler
- Fitting of a new window and replacing 6 others
- Fixed wiring inspection and a new fuse board
- Fitting of fire alarm and emergency lights
- Internal fire inspection
- New tables and chairs
- Replacement of light fittings and much other internal work.

Apart from the boiler, windows and the new fuse box, all the work has been carried out in kind by local volunteers.

The current grant request is primarily to undertake:-

- Repair work and repainting of the 5 old traditional windows £400
- Roof insulation as currently only half of the roof has insulation £150
- Redecoration of the interior £500

Grant requested from the Area Committee's Main Budget is £1,050

For the future, the team wishes to:-

- Refurbish the WC area est. £15k
- A utility kitchen in the old gents WC area est. £20k
- Reconfiguration of the existing kitchen est. £15k

It is likely that an application for the above 3 capital enhancements to the Rooms will be made under the Authority's new Community Facilities Capital Projects Fund which was launched a few months ago. The team is already liaising with Officers within the Communities Team in progressing an application to the Member Grant panel in the New Year.

8.3 **Small Acts of Kindness CIC**

The Committee is asked to consider a grant award of £300 from its main budget to Small Acts of Kindness CIC.

Small Acts of Kindness is an unregistered charity, consisting of 50 volunteers, which has been operating since 2014.

The group is seeking £2,100 in total from North Herts District Council and will be making representation at all 5 Area Committees during the November / December 2016 cycle of area meetings.

Funding is being sought to assist with costs of sourcing and distributing 150 Warm in Winter Gift bags to older people living in North Herts. Each Warm in Winter Gift bag contains a large fleecy blanket, thermal socks, hat and gloves, a mug and a selection of hot drinks.

North Herts CVS, North Herts Community Transport and Hertfordshire Independent Living Services have all made requests for gift bags for their clients living in Hitchin, Baldock, Royston, Letchworth and the villages of Knebworth, Whitwell and Ashwell.

8.4 **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.

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

The Communities Manager is liaising with a number of Parishes and rural groups 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.

Current Parishes / groups seeking advice / support:

- **Offley & Cockernhoe PC** – major enhancements to facilities at the Recreation Centre utilising £214k s106 developer contributions.
- **St Ippolyts PC** – possible enhancement works at Dell Field utilising £500 Informal Open Space UU contributions
- **Ickleford PC** – enhancement works to Children’s Play Area utilising UU contributions £13.8k
- **Graveley Cricket Club** – funding advice & Rural Grant of £2.5k re the installation of dedicated electricity supply to the pavilion.
- **Codicote Youth MUGA facility** – funding advice and assistance in developing a project to enhance the existing hard surface area on the St. Albans Road Recreation Ground.
- **Gt Ashby Community Centre** – Rural Grant of £2.5k re enhancements to children’s play area at the rear of the main building

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 aid/financial support but excluding grants for district-wide activities. The Committee has delegated powers, as a body, to allocate discretionary budgets and devolved budgets within the terms determined by the Council and outlined in the current Grant Policy agreed by Cabinet in June 2016.
- 9.2 Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 provides a General Power of Competence which gives local authorities the power to do anything that individuals generally may do. This may be for, or otherwise than for the benefit of the authority, its area or persons resident in its area.
- 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. From the 2016/17 financial year, a proposal was made through the council’s corporate business planning process to reduce the overall amount the council awards by way of grants, both area committee and district wide, by a suggested 20%. Following member workshops, there was a request that whilst the principle of saving approximately £86k of revenue was supported, the current level of district MoUs should be retained, thus the area committee element was reduced by a greater amount.

10.2 Appendix 1 provides details of the 2016/17 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 and risk system. Individual events should have their own risk assessments in place to mitigate any health and safety issues. Whenever a request for grant funding for equipment is received, the recipient of the funding will be advised to obtain insurance for the item to avoid a repeat request for funding in the event of the equipment being stolen or damaged. 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 2016/17.

15.2 Appendix 2 – Grant Form – Offley Village Hall

15.3 Appendix 3 – Grant Form – Dacre Rooms, Kimpton

15.4 Appendix 4 – Grant Form – Small Acts of Kindness CIC

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17. BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

17.2 Review of Grants Policy Report to Cabinet June 2016.