

Committee: COMMUNITY AND HOUSING COMMITTEE

Agenda Item

Date: November, 12 2009

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Title: LEAD OFFICER'S REPORT

Author: Diane Burridge, Director of Operations,
01799 510580

Item for information

Summary

- 1 This report updates Members on matters that are not otherwise on this Agenda and provides information items.

Recommendations

- 2 That the report is noted.

Situation/Update

3 Holloway Crescent Update

At the last Committee meeting it was decided that the main priority should be to provide the 5 bungalows on the garage site. This would enable the remaining residents to be relocated from the sheltered site, and a decision on the future of that site to be taken at a later meeting.

Swan Housing confirmed that they were unable to take the smaller scheme forward and subsequently withdrew their interest. Officers explored the possibility of the Council taking forward the scheme and a bid to part fund the provision of these bungalows was submitted to the HCA.

Officers were assisted with the technical aspects and the procurement process by East Thames Housing Association. The bid was submitted by the deadline of 30 October and the outcome will be known in December.

A meeting has been held with the residents of the sheltered complex and they voiced their concerns and frustration in the delays. In order to progress the project it was agreed to submit the planning application for the 5 bungalows based on the original plans.

4 Housing Options/Homelessness Update

The numbers of clients seeking housing advice has risen from 320 in the last six months of 2008/09 to 515 in the first six months of 2009/10.

The homelessness figures for 2009/10 continue to remain similar to those for 2008/09, again due to the prevention work being carried out by the housing options/homelessness team.

We have been having increased success in helping people find accommodation in the private sector. This is probably due to landlords being more willing to consider benefit applicants in order to get tenants into their properties, also an increased supply of properties where people are unable or unwilling to sell in the current climate. We have helped more applicants through the rent deposit scheme up to the end of October of 2009/10 (20) than in the whole of 2008/09 (17).

The Housing Options/Homelessness Manager was successful in gaining extra funding for Uttlesford's rent deposit scheme from the LAA via an Essex wide bid. Uttlesford's share of the funding is £11,523 paid over two years.

The reduced use of Bed and Breakfast has continued to be maintained and we have recently reviewed how we will in the future provide emergency temporary housing, taking in to account the need to make the best use of current council stock. The scheme that had previously been proposed for Stansted is now to be used for more permanent/move on accommodation. In addition to this it is proposed to use two of the currently empty Airport related houses for conversion to four smaller units of ready to let emergency accommodation. This will provide an alternative to bed and breakfast, make good use of housing stock and provide rental income.

5 Rent Reduction

The rent reduction was successfully implemented on 9 October. Whilst every effort was made to implement arrangements to collect the reduced rent increase as soon as possible there were a number of lead in times that had to be factored in to the process which meant that this was the earliest the new rent could be implemented. These included:

- Confirmation from the government that rents were to decrease - the final determination was not received by the Council until 20 May and no implementation guidance was given
- The need to make system changes - our housing management IT system provider Northgate were required to make system changes to enable the rents to be recalculated for 2009/10 and backdated to April. These system changes were not finalised until the beginning of October as work on them could not commence until the Government released the final determination
- Testing the revisions to the software for the rents and benefits systems – both systems had to be thoroughly tested by officers as the reduction in

rents required a recalculation of housing benefit for those qualifying tenants. This in turn had to be rolled back to the beginning of April

It should be noted that the implementation of a new rent and possible associated housing benefit payment part way through the year has never been done before and officers along with staff from Northgate worked hard to ensure that changes to rents, direct debits and housing benefit claims were implemented successfully and timely for this Council.

6 Lord Butler Swimming Pool, Saffron Walden

The pool will be open by the end of November. There have been delays due to insurance issues and contractors but the work is now programmed in and it is hoped that the work will be completed before the end of November but that is the date they are now working to.

The compensation to customers in respect of the period of the pool closure has been provided by Leisure Connection Ltd as follows:

- All of the direct debit payments for those with a swimming only membership package so they will not be paying anything at all for this period;
- Members who have an all encompassing membership have been provided with a 10% discount regardless of whether they use the pool or not.
- Additional adjustments have been provided for members with all encompassing memberships dependent on their historical high use of the pool.

7 Transfer of Amenities - Saffron Walden Castle

Members are advised that early discussions are being held with Saffron Walden Town Council about the potential transfer of this asset. There are funding opportunities that would be available for remedial works that need to be addressed to prevent further degrading of the Castle site, the detail of which will be set out in a future report should the discussions suggest this to be the best way forward.

8 Community Project Grants and Leisure & Cultural Grants 2009/2010

As requested by this Committee a year ago here follows a reminder of the grant process and a table of the applications follows at the end of this Lead Officers Report.

Applications were invited for the 2009/2010 Community Project Grants from properly constituted voluntary organisations or similar bodies, village hall

committees, community shops, town and parish councils, community associations, play and recreation clubs and groups within Uttlesford.

Projects must be completed after 1 April 2009 and before 5 March 2010. If an applicant is applying for under £1,000 they must provide 25% match funding and over £1,000 50% match funding, of which donations in kind can be taken into consideration.

Applicants needed to fully complete an application form and return it by Friday 22 May 2009, as well as supplying a number of documents such as: - latest accounts, estimate of income and expenditure, quotations for proposed project, planning permission or building regulations if required, views of parish/town council, full project brief, letters guaranteeing financial support, constitution, lettings polices and scale of charges if applicable. See Appendix I – Community Project Grants 2009/2010.

9 Garage Sites Update

Newport Parish Council have now confirmed that they are happy for site between Cherry Garden Lane and Frambury Lane to be developed for housing on the condition that an extensive lay-by is provided on the land currently owned by the District Council in Frambury Lane. This proposal will be investigated by officers who will report back to the parish council and this committee.

With regard to the other smaller site in Newport and the site in Chrishall, Flagship/Chelmer Housing have confirmed that funding from the HCA to progress these schemes has been approved and that a planning application will be submitted in due course. They have confirmed that figures will be open book throughout the process in case build costs increase or decrease.

Officers have continued to have discussions with Hastoe regarding the right of way over the garage site at Wimbish and the re-provision of Council owned garages. A consultation event has been held with local residents and a planning application will be submitted in due course.

Terms of the sale and any potential capital receipt will be reported to Committee once planning permission is obtained for the above schemes.

10 Pandemic Flu

The national picture is shown as bullet points below and is part of the Sit Rep sent by GO EAST dated 20th October 2009

- There has been an increase in cases in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland over the past seven days, whilst rates in Wales have remained

stable. Rates in N. Ireland are considerably higher than baseline (280.6 consultations per 100,000).

- In England, there were an estimated 78,000 new cases in England in week 43 (ending 25 October) compared with the revised figure of 50,000 in week 42 (56% increase) and rates in both GP sentinel schemes and NPFS increased to 41% and 29% respectively.
- Virus positivity rates are continuing to increase in England and N. Ireland, but have decreased in Scotland.
- As of 22 October the total number of deaths associated with Swine Flu across the UK was 137, (England 97, Scotland 25, Wales 7, Northern Ireland 8).

The bullet points below are of information shared from Mid Essex Primary Care Trust and were received 28th October 2009

- We are now in the second wave
- Numbers have increased within Essex around 20% compared to last week (most localities around 320 Tami flu collections per week)
- Numbers thus far for total antiviral collections since outbreak for Essex are approx (7800 Mid, 8700 North East, 5300 West, 11700 South West, 6000 South East)
- Most locations are still using pharmacies for antiviral collections although may revert back to NHS facilities if numbers significantly increase
- Acute trusts have started vaccinating acute trust staff and in patients
- Gp's and PCT's will start to receive their vaccine (in small batches) from 26th October although it will take 3/4 weeks for a national rollout
- Latest modelling suggests a less severe virus (worst case clinical attack rate of 12% down from 30%, Children under 16 are more susceptible to the virus (up to 30% may fall ill during the second wave),
- Increased activity amongst school children
- Communication strategy for swine flu across organisations established and will be escalated as appropriate

Locally:

Uttlesford is continuing to send a 'Nil Return' Sit Rep to Essex County and no cases have been reported for UDC to the EPO (emergency planning officer) currently.

Sit Reps are requested one per week at present which reflects how little information there is to report at this time.

Vaccination:

21st October saw the implementation of the vaccination for Swine Flu and at present is being managed through the normal route of GP administration and by priority to those at risk and being offered to all eventually.

For the moment we are continuing to send out the hygiene messages and requesting that any cases of illness with flu like symptoms are reported to the EPO to be included numerically in the weekly Sit Rep.

APPENDIX I Community Project Grant 2009/2010

| Reference Number | Organisation | Reason | Amount Required | Previous Grant award | Members' suggested funding |
|------------------|---|--|-----------------|---|----------------------------|
| CPG/09/001 | Newport Village Hall | Installation of noise limiting | 660 | £412 (0809) £635.25 (0708) | £660 |
| CPG/09/002 | Great Chesterford Recreation Ground Trust | New fencing and surfacing around play area | 3500 | | £2300 |
| CGP/09/003 | Little Chesterford Village Hall | Resurfacing village car park | 1850 | | £1000 |
| CPG/09/004 | Jikes Youth Centre | Replacement of building on the current site – ramps and access to building | 3500 | No | £2300 |
| CPG/09/005 | Littlebury Parish Council | Purchase two springer for play area | 738 | £576 (0809) £690 (0708) | £550 |
| CPG/09/006 | Wimbish Parish Council | Purchase two springers for play area | 738 | £745 (0809) £671 (0708) | £550 |
| CPG/09/007 | Radwinter Society | Archival quality storage of documents and photographs as well as display facilities for exhibitions and events | 1,111 | | £1111 |
| CPG/09/008 | Radwinter Over 60's | Purchase light weight tables for village hall | 125 | | £100 |
| CPG/09/009 | Langley Parish Council | Purchase two wooden benches | 900 | £800 (0809) | £550 |
| CPG/09/010 | Hatfield Heath Festival | Purchase power generator and tents for annual festival | 580 | No | £580 |
| CPG/09/011 | The Arts Centre | Build a storage area so local groups can borrow costumes and props | 850 | No | £550 |
| CPG/09/012 | Debden Parish Council | New equipment for play area; slide, climber and picnic table | 3500 | £1780 & £900 (0809) | £2200 |
| CPG/09/013 | Hatfield Heath Pre-School | Relocation of pre-school to a modular building | 3500 | 2379.13 (0708) | £2300 |
| CPG/09/014 | Old School Community Assocaition | Re-carpeting library in community hall | 1276 | £1269 (0809) | £750 |
| CPG/09/015 | Saffron Walden Town Council | Works to enhance and renovate band stand in Jubilee Gardens | 3500 | £1500 & £2000 (0809) £1750 (0708) | £3500 |
| CPG/09/016 | Saffron Walden Mini-Park | Purchase concrete sealant plus carriage to preserve the surface of the mini-skate park | 2177.26 | | £1800 |
| CPG/09/017 | Home-Start Uttlesford | 10 week course for 14 volunteers to prepare for visiting role | 1950 | | £1950 |
| CPG/09/018 | Great Chesterford Parish Council | Skate park at Great Chesterford | 3500 | £3500 (0809) £2509 (0708) | £2200 |
| CPG/09/019 | Debden Village Shop | Re-roofing shop | 1250 | | £1230 |
| CPG/09/020 | Stebbing Parish Council | Two junior football pitches and changing room on community use ground | 3500 | | £2200 |

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|------------|---|---|------------------|------------------------------|----------------|
| CPG/09/021 | Hatfield Broad Oak Parish Council | Purchase and erect youth shelter for inclusion in village green project | 3500 | | £2400 |
| CPG/09/022 | Little Easton Memorial Hall | Reinstate and tarmac entrance to memorial hall car park | 3015 | £3500 (0809) | £2000 |
| CPG/09/023 | Silver Jubilee Hall, Takeley | To finalise plans and secure planning and building regulations consent in respect of Takeley Social and Sports Club | £3500 | 3245 (0708) | £2300 |
| CPG/09/024 | Stebbing Parish Council | Safety surfacing and new toddler swing | 1695 | | £1300 |
| CPG/09/025 | Newport Parish Council | Prepare questionnaire and setting out and printing plan | 500 | £1000 (0708) | NIL |
| CPG/09/026 | Saffron Walden Initiatives | Purchase 4 good quality seat for high street | £1330 | | £1000 |
| CPG/09/027 | Chrishall Village Hall | Replace 24 year old partition doors which are heavy, broken and not sounded proof | £3500 | | £2300 |
| CPG/09/028 | Ashdon Windmill Trust Limited | Construction and installation of millstone cases and ancillary equipment | 2000 | £1750 (0708) | £2000 |
| CPG/09/029 | Saffron Walden Community Interest Company | Market stalls frames and shades, display racks and tables, second hand refrigerated van and IT equipment | 3500 | | £2000 |
| CPG/09/030 | The Juice Project | Contribution to equipment costs | 3500 | | £2800 |
| CPG/09/031 | Tang Ting Twinning Association | Purchase laptop, printer, video camera, projector and screen so can stage meetings and organise events | 1700 | | £1000 |
| CPG/09/032 | Elsenham Parish Council | Clear and level part of recreation area, remove rubble track and re landscape the surface so it becomes suitable for village activities | 1720 | | £1200 |
| CPG/09/033 | Thaxted Parish Council | Play equipment for recreation ground. Resurface path to play area. Redecorate community pavilion, internet affiliation fee and services, hanging baskets, training costs for Councillors and Officers | 3500 | £3500 (0809) £3500 (0708) | £2200 |
| CPG/09/034 | Support4Sight | Hold two family fund days at the centre an exhibition in Saffron Walden Town Hall and 12 information mornings in Dunmow, Stansted and Thaxted | 1482 | £1750 (0708) | £1482 |
| CPG/09/035 | Millennium Field Committee | Establish football posts and cricket nets in Millennium Field | 2000 | | £1500 |
| CPG/09/036 | Birchanger Nursery unit | Part of larger project: - phase one install a canopied area to give permanently dry outside space for children to play in | 3000 | | £2000 |
| CPG/09/037 | Wimbish PCC | Refurbishment of hall including provision of facilities for the disabled, insulation, re-wiring, re-plumbing, heating, double glazing etc | 3500 | | £2200 |
| CPG/09/038 | Debden Village Hall | Hire sander with belts to sand main hall floor. Re-fit bar area with new units. Clean and re-decorate internally | 3500 | | £2000 |
| CPG/09/039 | Arkesden Parish Council | Purchase new seat | 599 | £793 (0809) £572 (0708) | £450 |
| | | Total requested | £85746.26 | | |
| | | Plus carry over – under spend 08/09 | | | £60,513 |

Amount requested £85,746.26**Total in budget £60.513.74**