

3 June 2008

Our Ref: HD/SRuralCtte/ JUN. 08  
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To: The Members of the Southern Rural Committee of North Hertfordshire  
District Council

(Councillors: D.J. Barnard (Chairman), Tom Brindley (Vice-Chairman),  
Alan Bardett, John Bishop, Lee Downie, Tricia Gibbs, J. Gray,  
Sal Jarvis, David Miller and Mrs C.P.A. Strong).

You are invited to attend a meeting of the

## **SOUTHERN RURAL COMMITTEE**

to be held at

**THE COUNCIL OFFICES, GERON ROAD, LETCHWORTH  
GARDEN CITY**

on

**THURSDAY 12 JUNE 2008**

at

**7.30 pm**

Yours sincerely,



David Miley  
Democratic Services Manager

**AGENDA**  
**PART I**

<b>ITEM</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
<b>1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b>	-
<b>2. MINUTES</b> To take as read and approve as a true record the Minutes of the meetings of this Committee held on 3 April 2008 and 15 May 2008.	-
<b>3. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS</b> Members should notify the Chairman of other business which they wish to be discussed by the Committee at the end of the business set out in the agenda. They must state the circumstances which they consider justify the business being considered as a matter of urgency.  The Chairman will then decide whether the item(s) raised will be considered.	-
<b>4. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS</b> Members are reminded that any declarations of interest in respect of any business set out in the agenda, should be declared as either a prejudicial or personal interest and are required to notify the Chairman of the nature of any interest declared at the commencement of the relevant item on the agenda. Members declaring a prejudicial interest should leave the room and not seek to influence the decision during that particular item.	-
<b>5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION</b> To receive petitions, comments and questions from the public.	1
<b>6. DEVELOPMENT OF A RURAL RESOURCE CENTRE AT GREAT ASHBY</b> REPORT OF THE HEAD OF LEISURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES To note and comment on the above report to be submitted to Cabinet on 24 June 2008	3
<b>7. DISPOSAL OF AMENITY AND ALLOTMENT LAND AT THE REAR OF ELMTREE AVENUE COCKERNHOE TO FACILITATE A PROPOSED HOUSING REDEVELOPMENT BY NORTH HERTS HOMES LIMITED</b> REPORT OF THE HEAD OF FINANCIAL SERVICES To seek the Committee's views on the disposal of Council owned land at the rear of 25 to 53 Elmtree Avenue, Cockernhoe, prior to its consideration by Cabinet on the 24 <sup>th</sup> June 2008.	7

8. **PROPOSED ARRANGEMENTS FOR DISPOSAL OF COUNCIL OWNED HOUSING LAND AT LLOYD WAY, KIMPTON TO NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE HOMES LIMITED** 13  
REPORT OF THE HEAD OF FINANCIAL SERVICES  
To inform the Committee about the proposed method of disposal for the Council's remaining undeveloped housing land in Lloyd Way, Kimpton.
9. **CHAMPION NEWS AND COMMUNITY REPORT** 17  
REPORT OF THE HEAD OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURAL SERVICES  
*To advise the Committee of the activities and schemes with which the Community Development Officer has been involved since the last meeting held on 3 April 2008.*
10. **ANNUAL GRANTS, DEVELOPMENT, DISCRETIONARY AND VISIONING BUDGETS 2007-2008** 21  
REPORT OF THE HEAD OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURAL SERVICES  
*To advise the Committee on the current expenditure and balances of the Area Committee delegated budgets.*
11. **SOUTHERN RURAL – THE WAY FORWARD** 33  
*To discuss the activities of the Southern Rural Area Committee in the last year and any suggested alterations for the future.*

**The Southern Rural Area Committee Meetings for the Civic Year 2008 – 2009 will be as follows:**

**31 July 2008**

**02 October 2008**

**27 November 2008**

**22 January 2009**

**12 March 2009**

**SOUTHERN RURAL AREA COMMITTEE  
12 JUNE 2008**

**\*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

**AGENDA ITEM No.**

**5**

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

To receive petitions, comments and questions from members of the public. Public participation requests received within the agreed time will be notified to Members as soon as practicable.

At publication there have been no requests by the public to participate.

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**TITLE OF REPORT: DEVELOPMENT OF A RURAL RESOURCE CENTRE AT GREAT ASHBY**

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF LEISURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES  
PORTFOLIO HOLDERS: COUNCILLOR L. NEEDHAM & COUNCILLOR I. KNIGHTON

**1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1 To provide Cabinet and Southern Rural with an update with regards the work undertaken to progress a feasibility study to establish the potential of developing a Rural Resource Centre on the edge of the District Park at Great Ashby.
- 1.2 To provide an update regarding the future direction of this project.

**2 FORWARD PLAN**

- 2.1 This report contains a recommendation on a key decision that was first notified to the public in the Forward Plan April 2008.

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Great Ashby is an area of new housing development on the outskirts of North East Stevenage. It is a large and growing housing development, consisting of approximately 2,000 dwellings plus a range of community amenities. The largest of which is the District Park which provides open space for the area and is under the management of North Herts District Council (NHDC).
- 3.2 Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) in conjunction with NHDC have agreed to carry out a feasibility study investigating the possibility of building a 'rural resource centre' or 'environmental centre' within or adjacent to the District Park. The centre will be funded primarily using £275,000 of Section 106 funding secured by NHDC and will be used as match funding in the procurement of grant aid.
- 3.3 The authorisation for the undertaking and financing of this work was identified and reported to cabinet dated 26<sup>th</sup> June 07

**4. WORK UNDERTAKEN TO DATE**

- 4.1 Initial works have investigated the feasibility of designing a building based on the following specifications and principals.
  - Provide a new headquarters for HCC's North East Area Countryside Management Service (CMS) plus 'touchdown' facilities for NHDC and potentially other partners.
  - Showcase the principles of sustainable building construction and using the most appropriate solutions to maximise the natural resources of the location in order to produce a 'carbon neutral' building design.

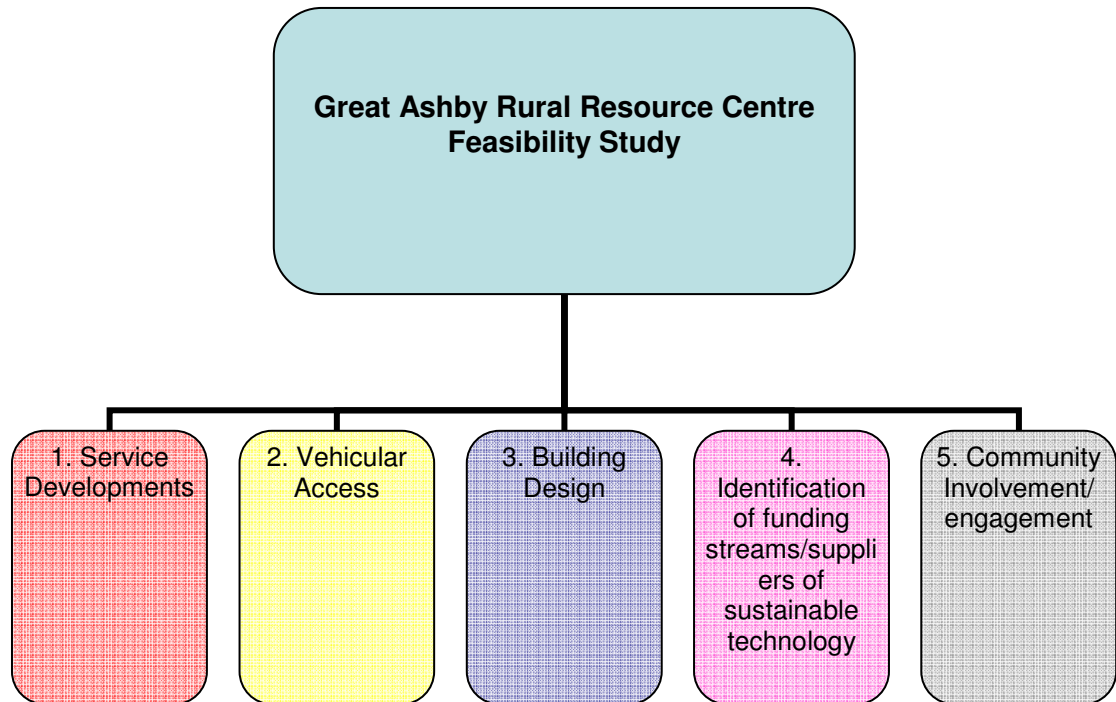
- To provide an example of HCC's and NHDC's commitment to sustainable development and to the climate change agenda.
- To encourage involvement of the Great Ashby community in the management of their green spaces.
- To use the premises to develop CMS by training and developing volunteer groups and to assist in the development of a Great Ashby Friends Group.

4.2 Initial work has been undertaken by Herts County Council, Countryside Management Services and North Herts District Council to identify the key elements of the project which has included the following items.

<b>Completed Task</b>	<b>By Whom</b>
Identify any alignment of the project with corporate, environmental and service based targets	HCC & NHDC
Identify links to other strategic areas such as the development of Friends of Groups and green infrastructures management	HCC
Identify potential traffic flows for the access	HCC
Scope the requirements of the access road with Transport Planning	HCC
Investigate previous projects proposed for the site	HCC & NHDC
Develop an estimated cost for designing the access road	HCC
Identify the requirements of potential users of the building	HCC & NHDC
Scope the initial principals of a sustainable construction and identify examples of good practice	HCC
Draft a brief for the employment of a consultant to progress the project from a concept to final design	HCC & NHDC
Consider the local community and methods of consultation	HCC & NHDC
Identify sources of grant funding	HCC

## **5. WORK COMPLETED TO DATE**

- 5.1 The key conclusion from the initial work completed to date is that it would be appropriate to proceed with a comprehensive feasibility study. At this stage there has been no single issue identified that cannot be overcome within the scope of this project.
- 5.2 The proposed project organisation is summarised below and has been broken-up into key areas of focus that will need to be addressed within the feasibility study.



## 6. IN DEPTH FEASIBILITY STUDY

- 6.1 The identified outputs of the proposed feasibility study will be to produce progress reports, provide design plans for the building and roads, reports and conclusions from specialists summarising the conclusions and to provide final reports to the appropriate committees identifying the most appropriate and achievable option in this instance.
- 6.2 Officers identify suitably experienced consultants to undertake the feasibility study and seek quotations so as to progress the project to a final design stage.
- 6.3 Upon completion of the feasibility study that a further report is provided for members to advise of the preferred option so as to seek authority to proceed with the intended development upon securing the required grant funding.

## 7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 None at this stage. However the feasibility study will also need to identify the various implications associated with a building that is jointly owned and managed by two separate authorities that could also be occupied in the future by other third party organisations.

## 8. FINANCIAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 A budget of £25,000 has been made available for the feasibility study relating to the building. Herts County Council have agreed to cover the £10,000 - £15,000 costs associated with the separate study associated with the highway and access roads. Following completion of the studies any scheme proposals will be incorporated into the business planning process for inclusion in the Council's capital programme.
- 8.2 Any financial and risk implications associated with the development of the Rural Resource Centre will be identified as part of the feasibility study.

8.3 The main risk is if the feasibility study concludes that the project is unaffordable or that the technologies available at present to meet the carbon neutral criteria are also uneconomic to either install or maintain in the future. However this will not be known until the proposed feasibility study is complete.

## **9. HUMAN RESOURCE AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 None in terms of the feasibility study

## **10. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS**

10.1 To date input has been from Herts County Council, Countryside Management Services and North Herts District Council. As part of the proposed feasibility study consultation will be undertaken with local residents and any organisation that has expressed an interest in the District Park from its conception.

## **11. RECOMMENDATIONS**

11.1 That Officers are authorised to proceed with the detailed feasibility study so as to identify the viability of the proposed Rural Resource Centre.

## **12. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

12.1 To provide sustainable working practices to best meet customer expectations for the maintenance of the environment in both urban and rural contexts.

12.2 To provide a show case example of sustainable development within a community development role so as to best meet its customers needs and provide value for money.

## **13. APPENDICES**

13.1 None

## **14. CONTRIBUTING OFFICERS**

14.1 Andrew Mills Service Manager Grounds  
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*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT	<p style="text-align: center;">AGENDA ITEM No.</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">7</p>
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**TITLE OF REPORT : DISPOSAL OF AMENITY AND ALLOTMENT LAND AT THE REAR OF ELMTREE AVENUE COCKERNHOE TO FACILITATE A PROPOSED HOUSING REDEVELOPMENT BY NORTH HERTS HOMES LIMITED**

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF FINANCIAL SERVICES  
 PORTFOLIO HOLDER: COUNCILLOR TERRY HONE

**1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1 To seek the Committee's views on the disposal of Council owned land at the rear of 25 to 53 Elmtree Avenue, Cockernhoe, prior to its consideration by Cabinet on the 24<sup>th</sup> June 2008.

**2. FORWARD PLAN**

- 2.1 This report does not relate to a key decision included it in the Council's Forward Plan.

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 North Hertfordshire Homes Limited (NHH) propose to demolish 24 statutorily defective Unity PRC houses in Elmtree Avenue Cockernhoe and to redevelop the site to provide a total of 34 dwellings as follows:-

**Two** x 1 bedroom 2 person maisonettes,  
**Six** x 2 bedroom 4 person bungalows,  
**Eight** x 2 bedroom 4 person houses,  
**Sixteen** x 3 bedroom 5 person houses  
**Two** x 4 bedroom 6 person houses.

- 3.2 In order to facilitate this redevelopment and to improve land utilisation, the proposed scheme includes two small parcels of Council owned land located at the rear of 25 to 53 Elmtree Avenue. These currently accommodate a number of disused allotments and a grass playing field surrounded by trees, bushes and a chain link fence.
- 3.3 Appendix A to this report outlines the extent of the 24 defective dwellings to be demolished and the adjoining Council owned land.
- 3.4 Planning permission for the proposed scheme, as outlined at Appendix B, has been granted subject to NHH entering into a formal Section S106 Agreement. However, this cannot be signed until the Association has purchased the adjoining Council land which is required to achieve the proposed redevelopment layout.
- 3.5 Under the terms of the proposed Section 106 Agreement, NHH will provide a more centrally located public open space comprising a community village garden and a new village hall.

#### **4. ISSUES**

- 4.1 The proposed land sale presents a further opportunity for the Council to make use of land held in advance of need to support the provision of additional and improved housing whilst at the same time securing a number of added community benefits.
- 4.2 The proposed scheme for which planning approval has been given will realise improved land use arrangements and achieve a long term solution to the problems associated with the Unity defective dwellings currently located on the site.
- 4.3 As will be apparent from paragraph 5.2 of this report, the land to be sold to NHH was acquired for the provision of housing or purposes ancillary thereto. Use of the land to support the proposed development therefore accords fully with its restrictive use covenant.

#### **5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Section 25 of the 1988 Local Government Act permits the disposal of land to registered social landlords at less than market value for the development of housing, other than housing for outright sale.
- 5.2 Part of the land proposed for sale to NHH is marked as a playing field i.e. an open space. For the purposes of complying with Section 123 of the Local Govt. Act, 1972, the disposal of this land will be advertised for two consecutive weeks in a local newspaper and consideration given to any objections received.
- 5.3 It is also appropriate to note that the conveyance dated 22 September 1945 relating to acquisition of the subject land by Hitchin Rural District Council included a covenant restricting its use to the erection of houses under the Housing Acts or purposes ancillary thereto.

#### **6. FINANCIAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The price to be paid by NHH in this instance is still the subject of negotiation, but is estimated to be in the order of £600,000, the outcome of which will be reported to Cabinet on the 24<sup>th</sup> June 2008. However, as with previous disposals to RSL's, the price will be discounted by 50% to allow for the provision of full nomination rights and the following additional factors:-
  - (a) The landlocked nature of the Council's land and
  - (b) Costs to be incurred by NHH in providing the proposed community garden and new village hall relative to standard Section 106 charges for each new dwelling.
- 6.2 Current practice with land transfers to registered social landlords such as NHH, is disposal in a range of £10,000 to £30,000 per residential plot while average values of support towards RSL development in the region is currently £43,000 per plot and rising. The estimated 50% discount of £300K to facilitate the provision of ten additional units accords with the average support provided.

#### **7. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS**

- 7.1 The Council's Asset Disposal Strategy, approved in July 2004, sets out that consultation should follow the following process; *"the relevant Ward Member(s) will be consulted on any proposals and consideration be given to wider community consultation. Following consultation a report on the officers recommendations will be presented to the appropriate Area Committee for their views before seeking approval from the relevant delegated Member or Committee"*.

7.2 Other than the requirement to advertise the Council's intention to dispose of the land, consultation with outside organisations is not necessary. The Ward member for Cockernhoe, Councillor Barnard has been informed about the issues covered in this report and has indicated his agreement to the principle of what is being proposed.

7.3 The views of this Committee are sought and will be reported to Cabinet on 24<sup>th</sup> June 2008.

## **8. HUMAN RESOURCE AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 None

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

9.1 That as part of the consultation process, the Committee gives its views to Cabinet on the proposal to dispose at discount the Council owned land outlined in Appendix A to this report.

## **10. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

10.1 To facilitate the provision of new social housing and community facilities through the use of Council owned land that might otherwise remain of limited benefit to the community.

## **11. APPENDICES**

11.1 Appendix A - Plan of housing redevelopment site and adjoining Council owned land  
Appendix B – Approved scheme plan

## **12. REPORT AUTHOR**

12.1 Jim Turner  
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## **13. CONTRIBUTORS**

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## **14. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

14.1 Approved scheme drawings and land holding records.

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<b>*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT</b>	<b>AGENDA ITEM No.</b>  <p style="text-align: center;"><b>8</b></p>
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**TITLE OF REPORT: PROPOSED ARRANGEMENTS FOR DISPOSAL OF COUNCIL OWNED HOUSING LAND AT LLOYD WAY, KIMPTON TO NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE HOMES LIMITED**

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF FINANCIAL SERVICES  
PORTFOLIO HOLDER: COUNCILLOR TERRY HONE

**1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1 To inform the Committee about the proposed method of disposal for the Council's remaining undeveloped housing land in Lloyd Way, Kimpton.

**2. FORWARD PLAN**

- 2.1 This report does relate to a key decision included it in the Council's Forward Plan in June 2008.

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 At the time of Local Government Reorganisation in 1974, the Council owned several acres of designated housing development land at the rear of 115-151 High Street, Kimpton.
- 3.2 Shortly after North Hertfordshire District Council came into being its Housing Committee implemented the first phase of housing development on the site comprising a sheltered scheme of flats for the elderly (Probyn House) and a small cluster of general needs houses. This phase was completed in about 1976 and the intention was that later phases would follow on shortly afterwards. However, because of other priorities, later phases of the site's development did not take place until after the early nineties, by which time the Council had ceased building houses for retention within its own housing stock. Consequently, subsequent development phases, all of which were relatively small and comprised mostly elderly persons bungalows for rent, were completed by Howard Cottage Society under an arrangement whereby the land was transferred at a discounted price in return for nomination rights.
- 3.3 Approximately half of the site still remains undeveloped and until late last year the intention was that this would be sold on the open market to raise funds to support the Council's capital programme. More recently, however, North Hertfordshire Homes Limited (NHH) have approached Council officers with a view to purchasing the whole of the land at open market value.
- 3.4 The reason for the Association's interest in the land is the need to replace the Probyn House sheltered scheme with modern homes that will be more suited to the needs of the local community. The availability of a site immediately next to Probyn House would therefore afford them the flexibility to close Probyn House once appropriate new housing has been developed on this site.

#### 4. ISSUES

- 4.1 The fundamental difference between this disposal and the disposal of other Council land for development by housing associations is that NHH would develop what they need to for the provision of much needed social housing and any remaining land be used to facilitate the development of housing for market purchase.
- 4.2 Clearly, the Council could just sell to NHH what the association needs for the re-provisioning of new social housing accommodation and then sell the balance on the open market. However, providing a full market price can be agreed upon and independently ratified, the proposal put forward by NHH offers a much quicker and simpler solution to what could otherwise become a difficult and time consuming land disposal process.
- 4.3 Notwithstanding the efficiency of a sale of all the land to NHH, the key advantage to this proposal is the manner in which it would facilitate provision of new and more comfortable alternative accommodation for residents of Kimpton.
- 4.4 Any further housing development by NHH beyond that required to provide alternative accommodation for the residents of Probyn House will be designed to meet the needs identified by the recent Parish housing needs survey. Likewise, any balance of land used by NHH for private development will also be subject to the usual requirements with regard to the provision of a proportion of affordable housing to meet local needs.
- 4.5 The village drainage and water pressure problems highlighted by the Parish Council during the land sale consultation process completed in September 2007 have been raised for consideration as part of the detailed design of any further development on the site.
- 4.6 Subject to approval of the proposed land sale by Cabinet at its 24<sup>th</sup> June meeting, NHH have provided the following outline programme for completion of the homes to be constructed for the residents of Probyn House.

<b>Programme Element</b>	<b><i>Projected Completion Date</i></b>
Scheme Design	October 2008
Planning Approval	January 2009
Construction Tenders	April 2009
Start on site by	June 2009
Phased completions	to be determined
Overall Project Completion	November 2010

#### 5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Section 25 of the 1988 Local Government Act permits the disposal of land to registered social landlords at less than market value for the development of housing, other than housing for outright sale. However, in this instance the proposal is to dispose of the land at full market value in accordance with the general rule under the Local Govt. Act 1972, section 123 which stipulates that a council shall not dispose of land for a consideration less than the best reasonably obtainable.

5.2 The provisions of the Council's Contract Procurement Rules, Appendix E permits land disposals by private treaty subject to all valuations and negotiations being carried out by or under the supervision of a qualified member of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors and an experienced surveyor. It is however, also intended to seek external professionally qualified confirmation of the negotiated price prior to completion of the proposed transaction.

5.3 Under Section 123 of the Local Govt. Act, 1972 to the extent (if any) that the land forms part of open space the intention to sell must first be advertised for two consecutive weeks in a local newspaper and consideration given to any objections received. This exercise was completed in September 2007 as outlined in paragraph 7.2 of this report.

## **6. FINANCIAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 The remaining Council housing land in Lloyd Way Kimpton has for some time been identified as a site for disposal on the open market at full market value and the site is currently valued in excess of £2.5 million. The proposal set out in this report will enable this objective to be achieved and at the same time assist the provision of an important element of social housing within the village.

6.2 The effective management of the disposal of land and property assets to assist the Council's capital programme is registered as a top risk.

## **7. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS**

7.1 Full consultation on the general proposal to dispose of this land on the open market was completed in September 2007. This involved advertising the proposed disposal for two consecutive weeks in the local papers. Arising from those advertisements, the Council received representations from the Parish Council concerning the implications the proposed development of the land would have on the drainage and water pressure problems being experienced in the village. A further representation was received concerning the loss of affordable accommodation arising from the demolition of Probyn House. Both these issues are addressed in paragraphs 4.4 and 4.5 of this report.

## **8. HUMAN RESOURCE AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 None

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

9.1 That the Committee notes the contents of this report and the manner in which the proposed disposal will assist the provision of alternative accommodation for the residents of Probyn House.

## **10. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

10.1 To keep the Committee informed about an important land transaction that will have a positive impact for an important element of social housing provision within the village.

## **11. APPENDICES**

11.1 None

## **12. REPORT AUTHOR**

12.1 Jim Turner  
Property Services Manager  
Tel: 01462 474540 Email: [jim.turner@north-herts.gov.uk](mailto:jim.turner@north-herts.gov.uk)

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13.1 Edgar Howard  
Asst Solicitor (Property Officer)  
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13.2 Barrie Jones  
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## **14. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

14.1 Asset Papers.

**TITLE: CHAMPION NEWS AND COMMUNITY REPORT****REPORT OF THE HEAD OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & CULTURAL SERVICES****1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1 To advise the Committee of the activities and schemes with which the Community Development Officer has been involved since the previous Committee meeting.
- 1.2 To bring to the Committee's attention some important community based activities that will be taking place during the next few months.

**2. FORWARD PLAN**

- 2.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key decision and has not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Not Applicable.

**4. ISSUES – PROJECT / ACTIVITY / SCHEME DETAILS**

- 4.1 North Herts Big F.A.B. Event

In partnership with Herts County Council's 'Wellbeing for Over Fifties' project group, the 50+ Community Development Officer is coordinating the largest event aimed people between 55 and 70 the district has seen so far. This project is being seen as pilot by Herts County Council, which is looking to roll out similar events county wide.

On Saturday June 14th 2008 at the Spirella Building in Letchworth, people from across the district will be invited to attend a community engagement exercise called 'Talking about My Generation'. In conjunction, the Big F.A.B. (Fifty and Above) Event will take the form of an Information fair with a Free Prize Draw, Health Checks, Complementary Therapies, Stalls provided by local community groups and organisations, as well as Tours of the public areas of the Spirella building.

Using the information gained from the community engagement process, the 'F.A.B. Development Plan - 2009 to 2012' will be drawn up to look at what activities and services will be required by the new generation of retired people in North Herts.

To be involved in the event or for more information contact 50+ Development Officer on 01462 474226.

#### 4.2 Service Level Agreements

A review of the Council's Policies and Procedures for Financial Assistance to the Voluntary and Community Sector is currently underway, with a report scheduled to go to Cabinet in the near future. This review includes the arrangements for Service Level Agreements as well as the general grants that are awarded by Area Committees.

#### 4.3 Pirton Parish Council

The Parish Council is considering the re-marking of the MUGA for sports other than tennis, as an endeavour to encourage greater use of the area, especially by young people within the village. In addition the Parish Council would also like to address the provision of storage for sports equipment at the same time.

The Parish Council believes the total cost of the work would be in the region of £3,500 and feels that it is now in the position to move the project forward. Community Development Officers are providing advice on the possible routes and sources of funding available and will update the Committee accordingly.

#### 4.4 Codicote Parish Plan Action Group

The Action Group felt that the Southern Rural Community Development Officer's address at their last meeting was of enormous value, with regards to the development of their plan.

The group has made a request to further discuss the criteria for funding assistance in the production of a Parish Plan and Community Development Officers are to provide advice on the possible routes and sources of funding available.

The Group has two further meetings scheduled for June and July 2008.

#### 4.5 NHDC Rural Community Grants Launch 2008/09

This year's Rural Community Grants round was launched at the end of May 2008 via direct mail to the Parishes and other rural community groups.

The grant schemes relate directly to those in the rural areas of the District, offering various opportunities for Parish Councils, and independently community operated facilities, to apply for grants to support projects / initiatives in their local areas.

In the past successful applications for funding have been made for projects such as refurbishments to a Village Hall building, the refurbishment of a children's playground, or the purchase and installation of new play equipment and for smaller funding requirements associated with parish cleansing and/or enhancement initiatives.

The grant schemes available for 2008/09 are:-

Parish Amenity Capital Improvement Fund  
Maximum Award: £50,000.00 / minimum Award: £28,000.00

Parish Challenge  
Maximum Award: £15,000

Parish Playground Fund  
Maximum Award: £2,000

Parish Cleansing and Enhancement Fund  
Maximum Award: £1,300

The deadline for completed applications must be received by noon on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2008, and an application form and full details on how to apply can be found on the Council's website.

Officers will be holding a drop in session at the main offices at Gernon Road (dates and times to be confirmed) to meet with those interested in submitting an application for funding and also for the respective groups to find out more about the different funding streams available.

Members in carrying out their civic duties may want to advise various groups that the grant schemes are now live and signpost them onto Community Development for further information.

The main contact for all grants for the time being is the Community Facilities Manager - Peter Underwood on 01462 474669.

This further information is to be circulated via the Members Information Service and an update article is to appear in the next edition of Outlook.

#### 4.6 Parish & Town Councils Conference 2008

The Conference has been scheduled for Monday 16<sup>th</sup> June 2008, at 5.30pm for refreshments and the formal Conference start at 6.00pm.

The Draft Agenda at the time of writing this report, is detailed below.

**- 18.00 Welcome and introduction**

Councillor Tricia Gibbs, Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement and Rural Affairs

**- 18.05 Green Issues**

Councillor Claire Strong, Portfolio Holder for Policy and Green Issues

**- 18.15 Climate Change Strategy for North Hertfordshire**

An interactive session facilitated by the Energy Saving Trust.

**- 19.25 Waste and Recycling**

Councillor Lynda Needham, Portfolio Holder for Waste and Recycling

- **19.30 In-Vessel Composting** – presentation and discussion  
Daniel Kingsley, NHDC Service Manager (Waste Management)

- **19.50 Progress Report on the Rural Strategy Action Plan (2005 – 2010)**

Liz Green, NHDC Head of Policy, Partnerships and Performance

- **20.05 North Hertfordshire Partnership (LSP)**

Appointment of two Parish and one Town Council representatives

Introduction by John Campbell, NHDC Chief Executive

- **20.30 Post Office Closures** – consultation update

Liz Green, NHDC Head of Policy, Partnerships and Performance

#### 4.7 Graveley Parish Plan

Community Development Officers are providing advice and support to the Parish Plan Group and have been requested to attend the first development meeting on Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> June 2008 at 8.00pm.

### 5. **CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS**

5.1 Consultation with the respective agencies, organisations and Ward Members has taken place with regards to the projects, activities and events mentioned in Section 4 of this report.

### 6. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

6.1 That the Committee endorses the actions taken by the Community Development Officer to promote greater community capacity and well being for rural communities.

### 7. **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

7.1 That the Committee enforces the actions and policies involved in the tasks and projects undertaken by the Community Development Officer.

### 8. **CONTACT OFFICERS**

8.1 Garry Gover (Community Development Officer – Southern Rural Area)

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8.2 Stuart Izzard (Acting Community Development Manager)

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**TITLE: ANNUAL GRANTS, DEVELOPMENT, DISCRETIONARY AND VISIONING  
BUDGETS 2008 - 2009**

**REPORT OF THE HEAD OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURAL SERVICES**

**1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1 To advise the Committee on the delegated budgets for financial year 2008/09. and the carry forward preallocated balances of delegated budgets from financial year 2007/08.
- 1.2 To bring to the Committee's attention details of recent application, allocation and commitment of delegated funds for Community initiatives and projects.
- 1.3 For the Committee to note the summary on Area Visioning expenditure that was submitted to the Scrutiny Committee on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008.
- 1.4 For Members of the Committee to consider the requested locations for the installation of Voluntary Disabled Parking Bays and possibly add sites for consideration within their respective wards.

**2. FORWARD PLAN**

- 2.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key decision and has not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 A spreadsheet detailing the total spends to date of the Area Development Budgets is enclosed as Appendix 1.
- 3.2 The Committee agreed last financial year that its programme of grant awards to community organisations would be managed on a meeting by meeting basis. All Parish Councils and Parish Meetings, Community and Voluntary Groups and Organisations were advised on this change and invited to apply for grant-aid.
- 3.3 The Head of Community Development and Cultural Services has advised that where there are multi Member Wards, it is good practice, and indeed custom and practice, for Members to advise their colleagues on any community grant requests. This will avoid any potential application conflicts and ensuring that multiple requests are managed in a coordinated way from the same organisation.

#### **4. ISSUES & FUNDING DECISIONS TO BE MADE**

- 4.1 A spreadsheet showing detailed spend to date of the Area Development budget is enclosed as Appendix 1.
- 4.2 Two grant requests have been made for the Area Committee to consider:
- a) Ickleford Parish Council - Production of Village Information Booklet - £757
  - b) Knebworth Festival Committee - Funding for the Festival 08 - £1,000
- 4.3 At the last Joint Members Panel, Herts Highways Meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2008 it was agreed that Ward Member opinions should be sought with regard to the possibility of highlighting any additional locations for the installation of Voluntary Disabled Parking Bays within each ward.
- 4.4 A detailed item is to be released within the Members Information Service week ending Friday 6<sup>th</sup> June 2008, asking for Members' comments on the matter to be returned to the Planning Projects Manager, Louise Symes Officers by Monday 30<sup>th</sup> June 2008.

#### **5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The Committee has delegated powers to administer funds from the budgets described.
- 5.2 There are no other legal implications pertinent to this report.

#### **6. FINANCIAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Members are asked to note the information detailed in Appendix 1 of the report, which relates to the Area Committee budget balances the current financial year 2008/2009.
- 6.2 The spreadsheet also details the pre-allocations carried forward from the previous financial year 2007/2008.
- 6.3 In addition, the spreadsheet includes the balances and past expenditure relating to the allocated Area Visioning Budgets available to the Committee.
- 6.4 The total budget for the Committee for 2008/2009 is £25,789, including a Ward Members budget of £7,000.
- 6.5 The current unallocated base budget is £18,789.
- 6.6 2 Discretionary grant applications to the requested total of £1,757 which are criteria compliant, have been received as outlined in Appendices 2 and 3.
- 6.7 The current unallocated Members Ward Discretionary Budget is £7,000.

## **7. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBER**

- 7.1 Consultation with Members has occurred in connection with the allocation of funds for Community Projects.
- 7.2 Consultation with the respective officers and external agencies/groups has taken place with regard to funding proposals for Area Committee Discretionary Development Funds.

## **8. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 8.1 The Committee is asked to note the budgetary expenditure, balances and carry forwards from the Ward Development Budgets and the allocated Visioning Budgets as set out in Appendix 1.
- 8.2 The Committee is asked to allocate grants to applicants as detailed in Appendices 2 and 3.
- 8.3 That the Committee notes the response to the Scrutiny Committee as detailed in Appendix 4.
- 8.4 That Members consider any additional locations within in their respective Wards for the possible installation of Voluntary Disabled Parking Bays and to advise the Planning Projects Manager, Louise Symes Officers by Monday 30<sup>th</sup> June 2008.

## **9. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 9.1 The allocation of funds will improve the services provided by the local organisations and groups that are available and accessed by various members of the community.

## **10. APPENDICES**

- 10.1 Appendix 1 – Budget expenditure, balances, and carry forwards from the Ward Development Budgets and the allocated Visioning Budgets.
- 10.2 Appendix 2 – Grant Form - Ickleford Parish Council - Village Information Booklet - £757
- 10.3 Appendix 3 - Grant Form - Knebworth Festival Committee – Festival '08 - £1,000
- 10.4 Appendix 4 – Response to Scrutiny Committee 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008 – Area Visioning

## 11. CONTACT OFFICERS

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## SOUTHERN RURAL AREA COMMITTEE BUDGET 2008/2009

<b>SUMMARY/ TOTALS</b>	<b>Funding</b>	<b>Allocated</b>	<b>Spent</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>Unallocated Budget</b>					
Revenue Visioning	£12,340	£12,340	£2,535	£9,805	£0					
Capital Visioning	£54,600	£15,000	£10,000	£5,000	£39,600					
Discretionary Budget 0708	£23,510	£4,721	£4,142	579	£18,789					
Member Discretionary Budget 0708	£7,000	£0	£0	£0	£7,000					
Preallocated Amounts carried forward from 0607	£26,335	£24,205	£0	£24,205	£2,130					
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£123,785</b>	<b>£56,266</b>	<b>£16,677</b>	<b>£39,589</b>	<b>£67,519</b>					

<b>REVENUE VISIONING</b>	<b>Funding</b>	<b>Year Allocated</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Allocated</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Spent</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>Unallocated</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Preallocated Budgets Brought Forward from 0708	£12,340	2005/06	Southern Rural - Community Events	£500	16.03.06	£453	£47		
		2005/06	Southern Rural - Volunteers	£1,000	16.03.06	£0	£1,000		
		2005/06	Southern Rural - Parish Plans	£4,150	16.03.06	£782	£3,368		
		2005/06	Southern Rural - Village Halls	£990	16.03.06	£0	£990		
		2005/06	Southern Rural - Youth Events	£500	16.03.06	£0	£500		
			Southern Rural - Warranty for CCTV Cameras	£5,200	16.11.06	£1,300	£3,900		
<b>Total</b>	<b>£12,340</b>			<b>£12,340</b>		<b>£2,535</b>	<b>£9,805</b>	<b>£0</b>	

<b>CAPITAL VISIONING SR</b>	<b>Funding</b>	<b>Year Allocated</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Allocated</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Spent</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>Unallocated</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Capital Visioning SR	£54,600	2006/07	Scooter & Cycle Transport Solutions (Scoots)	£15,000	13.07.06	£10,000	£5,000		
	<b>£54,600</b>			<b>£15,000</b>		<b>£10,000</b>	<b>£5,000</b>	<b>£39,600</b>	

<b>DEVELOPMENT BUDGETS</b>	<b>Funding</b>		<b>Project</b>	<b>Allocated</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Spent</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>Unallocated Amount</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Preallocated Funds Brought forward from 2007/2008	£26,335		Preston Tennis Club	£448	02.02.06	£0	£448		
			Preston Cricket Club	£1,000	24.08.06	£0	£1,000		
			Preston Cricket Club	£700	01.02.07	£0	£700		
			Highways Project - Codicote	£2,000	15.03.07	£0	£2,000		
			Southern Rural Community Projects	£3,660	15.03.07	£2,814	£846		
			Letchworth Arts Centre	£3,000	20.02.08	£3,000	£0		
			Dog Bin	£210	14.03.08	£149	£61		
			Dog Bin	£210	14.03.08	£149	£61		
			Highways Project	£12,977	03.04.08	£0	£12,977		
				<b>£24,205</b>		<b>£6,112</b>	<b>£18,093</b>	<b>£2,130</b>	
Base Budget 08/09	£23,510		Wyndley Baptist Church	£642	20.02.08	£642	£0		
			Lilley Village Fete Committee	£579	20.02.08	£0	£579		
			Codicote Village Day Committee	£1,000	03.04.08	£1,000	£0		
			Codi-Fest	£1,000	03.04.08	£1,000	£0		
			Kimpton May Festival 2008	£1,000	13.12.07	£1,000	£0		
			Great Ashby Fun Day	£500	13.12.07	£500	£0		
				<b>£4,721</b>		<b>£4,142</b>	<b>£579</b>	<b>£18,789</b>	
Member Discretionary Awards £700 per Member 08/09	£7,000								
				<b>£0</b>		<b>£0</b>	<b>£0</b>	<b>£7,000</b>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>£56,845</b>			<b>£28,926</b>		<b>£10,254</b>	<b>£18,672</b>	<b>£27,919</b>	

**Area Visioning**

The Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008 resolved that the following answer on the Area Visioning budgets should be circulated to all Area Committees, for their information and to take any further actions as required.

**NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL****SCRUTINY COMMITTEE****MINUTES**

**Meeting held at the Council Offices, Gernon Road, Letchworth Garden City  
on Tuesday, 1 April 2008 at 7.30p.m.**

**92. QUESTIONS**

The following question had been submitted by Councillor David Billing.

**(H) Area Visioning**

"Please could we be updated as to the continuance of the work of the various Visioning Groups. In particular, when did each of them last meet formally, when were their Action Plans last updated, how many of their intended projects which were due to be completed by December 2007 were completed and how many still are unfinished, what is the total (aggregated for all years to date) of the budgets (revenue and capital) for each which have been spent to date, and what budgets remain unspent?"

**The following response had been provided by the Head of Community Development & Cultural Services:**

**1. Visioning Funding**

The Area Visioning programme was time limited to four years April 2002 – March 2006. The budget allocation each year was £50,000 revenue, allocated on a pro-rata demographic basis. The capital allocation was £375,000 As of 30.01.08, the budget position is:

**Revenue Budgets**

Area Committee	Allocation	Committed (not spent)	Spent	Unallocated
Letchworth	55,570	11,354	39,867	4,410
Hitchin	59,850	3,010	56,840	0
Baldock	34,210	1,053	33,157	0
Royston	17,709	1,493	16,216	0
S. Rural	35,405	5,910	29,495	0

**Capital Budgets**

Area Committee	Allocation	Committed (not spent)	Spent	Unallocated
Letchworth	120,100	75,232	28,000	16,355
Hitchin	112,600	110,350	0	2,250
Baldock	75,000	75,000	75,000	0
Royston	62,700	62,700	0	0
S. Rural	79,600	41,900	5,000	32,700

**2. Area Work Programmes**

Each Area Committee did develop a three year work programme, based on the initial visioning consultation. These programmes were last formally reviewed during November to February 2005/6. Thereafter, all the outstanding projects that were deemed achievable were transferred to the Area Committee report / budget process.

Monitoring of progress on these issues is now carried out at Area Committee meetings, via the Champion News and Delegated Budget reports.

As part of the implementation of the new Sustainable Community Strategy, consideration is being given to refreshing the work programme approach for Area Committees.

**3. Visioning Groups**

Each Area Committee developed its own approach to visioning and not all set up specific visioning groups.

**Baldock**

The original visioning group became the Baldock Bypass Consultation Group which evolved into the Town Centre Stakeholder Consultation Group that meets periodically to address Town Centre Developments and the Town Partnership Group that meets monthly to look at initiatives of raising the Town's profile with regards to business and tourism.

Revenue commitments and expenditure:

Consultants for Land associated to By-Pass £23,400  
 Streetscene Improvements (HH funding) £14,000  
 Town Centre Conservation Area £1,275  
 Tree Works £4,500

Capital commitments and expenditure:

Feasibility study for new railings £15,000  
 Two CCTV cameras £60,000

**Hitchin**

Established 3 local visioning groups – Youth, Transport and Planning.

The last formal meeting of the Planning Group was in June 2006 and there remain a number of outstanding issues, eg: Churchgate.

The 2020 Transport Vision for Hitchin was presented to Hitchin Area Committee in March 2007 by the Visioning Transport Sub Committee.

The Youth Visioning Group became the Voice of Hitchin Youth and still meets on a regular basis.

Revenue commitments and expenditure:

Woodside Screening £10,544  
Town Centre Strategy £927  
Visioning Presentations £443  
BMX Dirt Bike Track £1,372  
Tree Planting Butts Close £1,500  
Voice of Hitchin Youth £1,500  
Churchgate Project £2,635  
Community Centre leaflet £700  
Cabbies Hut, Market Place £1,300  
Community Centres Leaflet £700

Capital commitments and expenditure:

Refurbishment/rebuild of Bancroft Hall (£67,500) & improvements to Windmill Hill (£42,850).

### **Southern Rural**

No specific visioning group has met. There were visioning representatives pre 2003 who fed in to the overarching Visioning document. To develop the Rural Strategy (2004/5), a Rural Members Group and multi-agency Strategic Rural Partnership Group were established, but these have not met since 2006.

All Parish Councils/Parish Meetings are consulted on many district wide issues/strategies and there is an annual Rural Parish and Town Council Conference.

Revenue commitments and expenditure:

Reduce vandalism in Breachwood Green, St Ippolyts and Kimpton £3,000  
Drugs and alcohol project for young people £500  
Anti fly tipping measures £2,000  
Produce Village Halls booklet £1,350  
Rural detached outreach youth provision £6,000

Capital commitment and expenditure:

SCooTS 2 Wheels Scheme £15,000.

### **Letchworth**

The original visioning group was wound up as a result of the evolving a Town Council and the Letchworth Town Centre Partnership.

Revenue commitments & expenditure:

The Grange Improvement Forum £500  
The Grange Youth Club £10,190  
Jackman's Youth Initiatives £6,263  
Street Tree Planting £5,000  
Letchworth Youth Council £2,000

Capital commitments & expenditure:

New Youth Facility within the proposed Ivel Court development £30,000  
The Grange Community Garden Project £45,745  
Letchworth Open Air Pool – enhancement works £28,000

### **Royston**

Set up one visioning group of about 11 people, ranging from 15 to 80 plus.

Revenue commitments and expenditure:

Young People's events £4,000  
Bus stop seating £1,400  
Royston Town Council – East of England £2,000  
Youth Council £790

Capital commitments and expenditure:

£62,700 to transport related projects.

### 4. Outstanding Projects

Other than those listed below, all projects identified through visioning are either completed, ongoing or mainstreamed.

### **Baldock**

The Area Committee committed the remaining revenue balances of the visioning programme to the future Town Centre enhancements £2,470 (this was area committee visioning, not main visioning)

### **Letchworth**

Unallocated capital funds of £16,355 are being proposed for a range of projects associated with Norton Common .

Youth Activities Wilbury Area £5,000

### **Southern Rural**

Revenue visioning - £1k project for volunteers yet to complete, £4,150 agreed (£3,368 yet to allocate) in support of Parish Plans, £990 underspend against Village Halls Networking events as project now completed. Awaiting re-allocated project

Capital visioning - £32,700 yet to allocate on other projects.”

Following debate upon the response, it was

**RESOLVED:** That the answer provided by the Head of Community Development & Cultural Services be circulated to the Area Committees.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To enable the Area Committees to make any further decisions required regarding the follow-up of outstanding projects and any under spends.

<b>*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT</b>	<b>AGENDA ITEM No.</b>
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<b>11</b>
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**SOUTHERN RURAL – THE WAY FORWARD**

The Chairman to lead a discussion on the past years activities of the Southern Rural Area Committee and any suggested alterations for the future.

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