

Area North Development Plan - Budget Update

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Purpose of the Report

This report provides an update on the progress of projects taking place in Area North funded or partly funded by the Area and DX capital programmes. It also reports on the current position of the Area North Reserve budget, and the Community Grants programme.

Public Interest

The Area Development Service support the Council's four Area Committees (North, South, East and West) to work closely with local communities, *making a difference where it counts*.

Deciding what to do next, including where the money gets spent is an ongoing process of understanding what matters to local people – for example increasing the availability of work, strengthening community life, improving access to housing and services or addressing environmental issues.

This report provides an opportunity for the members of the Area North Committee to see what funds have been used to support local work, and to consider ideas for the future.

Recommendations

- (1) Endorse the current Area North capital programme for 2014 and future years, as set out in Appendix A.
- (2) Note the current position of the Area North Reserves
- (3) Note the current position of the Area North Community Grants budget
- (4) Note the position of discretionary / project budgets held by Area North

Background

Full Council approves the Council's overall budgets in February each year and then delegates the monitoring of budgets to District Executive and the four Area Committees. Area North has delegated responsibility for making decisions on community / partnership grants over £1000; the Area North Capital Programme, and the Area North Reserve. District Executive monitors all budgets on a quarterly basis.

Financial decisions from Area budgets are made with reference local priorities as well as the council plan. A copy of the agreed Area North priorities for 2014-15 are attached in Appendix B.

Area North Capital Programme

The capital programme is used support investment into local assets – usually this means equipment, land or buildings – and these may be to improve or create the council’s own assets or to assist others through grants / partnerships.

The current capital programme is attached in Appendix A. This sets out the various schemes currently supported, with monies still to be spent. There is a lead officer responsible for each scheme and their comments are included on the current status and plans for completion.

This capital programme shows there is currently £228,536 unallocated for local priority schemes (enhancing facilities and services) and also £45,000 set aside for Planning Enforcement; in total giving an unallocated balance of £273,536. (These figures do not include any further grants awarded in August 2014).

Area North Reserves

There is currently £16,600 unallocated in the Area North Reserve. The table below shows the current position of the Area North Reserve – this is a budget which will diminish over time and is not replenished. It can be used to support urgent work which is not otherwise provided for in current budgets. It can also be used as a form of underwriting where a provision helps priority work to proceed, but where there are other options to be called upon first.

			13-14	14-15	14-15
Balance at 1st April 2014			34,600	26,600	26,600
			Paid	Paid	Allocated
Allocation of reserve:			13-14	14-15	14-15
	Approval	Vired (Paid)			
Support towards progressing affordable rural housing schemes within the Area North (Original £15,000) (Note 1)	Mar-09	5,000			10,000
Interpretation panels at Cartgate picnic area (Note 2)	Jun-12	4,320			
Housing and Welfare Service for 2013 (Note 3)	Jan-13	8,000	8,000		
Total paid / allocated:			8,000	0	10,000
			26,600	26,600	16,600

Unallocated

Note 1 - £10,000 remains to support essential, unfunded costs relating the development of affordable housing particularly for small scale / local / community-led schemes. There are still schemes to support and the approach taken has been successful to date. Each scheme in Area North is closely monitored and any recommendation for the use of this fund is agreed by the Area Development Manager through discussion with the Area Chair, Ward Member and Strategic Housing Manager.

Note 2 - The Cartgate marketing panels installed in 2012 were very well received, and are a prime opportunity to support business recovery in the flood affected areas of South Somerset. Some ‘refresh’ of the artwork is under discussion.

Note 3 - The service provided to assist with the take-up of welfare benefits – through local surgeries – has continued after the end of the funding from Area North.

Area North Community Grants

The table below shows the current position of the budget allocated for Community Grants as part of the Council's revenue budget. Last year (2013-14) the full budget was not allocated and £6000 has been carried forward to this year's budget. As well as adding to our grants allocations, this budget can help support the costs of additional support to a local project to make progress at an early stage – for example help with funding applications or technical / legal advice on governance.

The table below shows grants already committed to this year's budget of £19,980. This amounts to £4500, so the balance remaining is £15,480. (Subject to any further commitments made during August 2014).

£10680	Original Budget 14/15		
£9300	Carry Forward approved June 2014 (£3300 commitments from 2013-14 not yet paid plus £6000 unallocated)		
£19980	TOTAL REVISED 14/15 BUDGET		
Group	Project	Award	Status
Curry Rivel Village Hall (12/13)	Hearing loop	£750	Pending other works – monitored.
Kingsbury Episcopi Parish Council	Community defibrillator	£1000	To be installed at recreation ground.
Long Sutton Cricket Club (13/14)	Cricket coaching sessions and coach training courses	£750	Sessions underway.
Shepton Beauchamp – Cowleaze Meadow (13/14)	Informal Play/Landscaping	£750	Project completed
Somerton Recreation Trust (13/14)	Support for master planning / feasibility	£750	Project plan to be prepared.
Ash Parish Council (14/15)	Refurbishment - Ash Churchyard walls	£500	Work to commence in September
	Total committed to date	£4500	
	Remaining budget for 14-15 (Total less commitments)	£15,480	

Ward members are encouraged to look out for local opportunities for SSDC to achieve its aims and address the Area North priorities. Small grants (under £1000) in particular can help start something new or revitalise an existing activity within any community. Larger grants are generally for capital schemes and can take considerable time to plan and design. The Area Development team spends significant time on supporting these types of projects which can have a lasting and positive effect on local life.

Area North Discretionary funds – special project budgets.

The Area North annual budget includes around £9000 to support various activities during the year designed to meet local priorities. This can include the cost of arranging our own

workshops and meetings; providing specialist advice additional advice, or help with printing costs to promote community led meetings and consultations. Decisions on this budget are generally taken by the Neighbourhood Development Officers, on receiving requests for SSDC assistance. Officers try to avoid repeat funding, and will suggest alternatives when they seem obvious. Decisions are made with reference to the agreed Area / Ward level priorities, as well as the Council Plan. Without doubt, the ability to respond quickly with practical help at a local level is much appreciated by the many volunteers, councillors or business groups we support during the year.

There is £22,000 in the 2014-15 Area North budget to support priorities for new or additional services in Area North. This is a one-off budget and has been carried forward from previous years. At the time of allocation in 2010 there was an intention to support community transport services, however no realistic / affordable scheme has been identified and it is felt other funding sources are likely to be available should the opportunity arise. For example helping a car share service to set up, or to assist with the costs of an accessible vehicle.

The area of work currently identified as the highest priority for support through this financial provision is small business support through additional marketing for the 'visitor economy' – linked to the objectives of SSDC's Council Plan and the 20 Year Flood Action Plan for the Somerset Levels and Moors. However there are other potential sources such as the Government grant for small business support, and the future potential of the Levels and Moors Leader programme expected to open in January 2014. A marketing / business support plan is under preparation.

Financial Implications

The level of Area North's funding is shown in the body of this report and on the appendix. There are no additional financial implications to this report.

Council Plan Implications

Include links to the Council Plan – see separate document for copying and pasting of focuses.

Carbon Emissions & Climate Change Implications

None from this report.

Equality and Diversity Implications

None from this report.

- Background Papers:**
- *Area North Development Plan 2014-15*
 - *Area North Committee June 2014 - Area Development (North) Review of 2013-14 and Priorities for 2014-15.*
 - *Somerset Levels and Moors 20 Year Flood Action Plan*
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