

Area West – Area Chapter 20/21 Update & Finance report (Executive Decision)

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Purpose of the Report

To provide Members with an overview of this year's delivery of the Area Chapter and finance budgets for Area West.

Public Interest

The priorities for Area West have been used to influence the development of the Council Plan for 2019/20. Some priorities identified clearly have an area focus and are better placed in an Area Chapter. The Area Chapter presents key projects and areas of work planned for the coming year by teams from across the whole organisation.

This report provides members with an update on the 20/21 Chapter.

Recommendations

- (1) That members note and comment on the report.
- (2) Endorse and agree allocation of spend on the following projects:
 - £2,000 from the Area Discretionary/Project revenue budget to support the development of a food and drink directory.
 - £4,000 from the Area Discretionary/Project revenue budget to support a new children's nature trail leaflet.
 - £6,000 from the Area reserves budget to support Blackdown Hills AONB Somerset Connections project.

Background

Area Chapters focus on the priorities of the Area Committee. These priorities were identified by Members and SSDC Area + teams through member workshops, other service plans and data led information. The 2020/2021 Chapter forms part of the Council Plan.

Area + teams consist of officers across the council who are best placed to provide the resources necessary (people and financial) in order to delivery each priority set out in the chapter. Each action or project identified in the plan is allocated a lead officer who collaborates with other officers across the council and/or the local community to deliver the project. The overall approach to delivery is based on the principle that we will enable others to deliver where we can, partner where it makes sense and only deliver if absolutely necessary.

Budget Information

Area West has the following funding for allocation (not including carry forwards as these will already have been previously allocated to projects)

	Budget
20/21 Community Grant revenue budget – Yearly starting allocation for applications within the Community Grant programme	£11,180
20/21 Discretionary & Project revenue budget – Yearly starting allocation for local support / community start up projects and chapter projects	£15,060
Capital Programme – rolling programme for allocation within the Community Grant programme or other agreed capital project funding	£134,749
Reserves – all reserve funding is currently unallocated	£46,220

Spend to date on Discretionary & Project revenue budget

Partnership funding to support Blackdown Hills AONB (agreed at committee and paid)	£6,000
Remaining balance	£9,060

Delivery of the Area Chapter

Members will appreciate this first quarter has been overtaken by the recent pandemic and the requirement for SSDC to quickly respond to critical areas of need. Some staff were diverted to help other services within the Council, this along with an enforced lockdown, the slow re-opening of services and trades has meant that some project work will have been possibly delayed or the original project changed.

Appendix A sets out this year's progress and overview of the area Chapter focus priorities for 20/21. You will note that clear outcomes, milestones, key activities and resources have been added to the delivery plan to enable recording and monitoring of projects.

Funding requests

Project Lead Officers are requesting the following Area resources to help assist delivery of elements or completion of projects in this year's chapter:

Chapter priority	Project	Funding	Suggested budget
Continue to support key businesses including work with the Chamber of	Develop a Food and Drink Directory. Please see Appendix B	£2,000	Discretionary / Project budget

Commerce and other partners			
Preserve the biodiversity and develop Chard Reservoir as a green tourism destination; investigate opportunities to improve the visitor infrastructure and information.	New children's nature trail leaflet proposed to enable self-guided activities around the site (providing activity outside even in the absence of a site events programme).	£4,000	Discretionary / project budget
Continue to support the Blackdown Hills AONB	To support Somerset Nature Connections which is a partnership project between Somerset Wildlife Trust, Blackdown Hills, Quantock Hills and Mendip Hills Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs). The project will work closely with Mind in Somerset and 'Chard Working All Together In Chard' (WATCH) and share learning through the recently formed Somerset Nature and Wellbeing Network to support Somerset's communities to connect with the natural environment to improve mental health.	£6,000	Reserves

Community Grant Awards

1 revenue grant has been awarded for £989.00 to Dragons of Chard. There are currently 3 applications waiting for more information or to be assessed, plus provisional allocation for Local Information Centre in Chard, Crewkerne and Ilminster leaving a current revenue balance of £7,391.00

There are also 4 applications likely to come forward to Committee. These are currently being assessed by officers.

Financial Implications

A balance of £3,060 will remain in the discretionary/project budget if £2,000 is endorsed for the Food and Drink directory, £4,000 for a new children's nature trail leaflet. A balance of £40,220 will remain if £6,000 is agreed for Blackdown Hills AONB Somerset Nature Connections project.

Corporate Priority Implications

The priorities have been developed taking into account the SSDC Corporate plan and Area Chapter priorities.

Carbon Emissions & Climate Change Implications

This is considered on an individual project and programme basis as appropriate. The overall priority is to seek to create more balanced communities where people can live, work and get access to the services and facilities they need on a daily basis. Area working (Area+) helps to improve access to facilities, activities and services, reducing the need to travel.

All Community Grants applications are now assessed and scored against the environmental impact of projects.

Equality and Diversity Implications

This is considered on an individual project and programme basis as appropriate. All Area Plans will have an Equality Impact Assessment.