



CABINET SUB COMMITTEE (WHQS) – 23RD JANUARY 2014

SUBJECT: TRANSFORMING HOMES, LIVES AND COMMUNITIES – LOCAL EMPLOYMENT FUND

REPORT BY: INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The report seeks approval to commit expenditure from the 2013/14 budget against the Local Employment Fund to support local community based projects that help provide people with greater access to employment and training opportunities.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Following the ballot in February 2012, the Council agreed that it would deliver the promises made in its Offer Document to tenants and deliver the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) by 2019/2020. It also gave a commitment to delivering numerous additional benefits which were also outlined in the Offer Document, which would add value to the WHQS programme and help deliver the Council's ambition of using the £210 million WHQS investment as a catalyst to Transform Homes, Lives and Communities.
- 2.2 These additional benefits include the creation of a Local Employment Fund that has been designed specifically to support the development of local community employment projects that aim to support people to move from unemployment / inactivity into sustainable employment. It will fund projects that directly contribute towards the Council's aim of Transforming Homes, Lives and Communities and to one or more of the following Communities First priorities; developing prosperous communities, learning communities and healthier communities.
- 2.3 To date a number of requests have been received from organisations and internal departments who are aware of the fund and its purpose, to finance a number of employment support interventions.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 The WHQS is intended to ensure that all local authority and housing association homes are improved and maintained to achieve specified standards.
- 3.2 The Council is committed to ensuring that the WHQS investment transforms not only homes but also lives and communities.
- 3.3 The WHQS programme is coterminous with Caerphilly's Single Plan priority to create 'Prosperous Communities' (P2).
- 3.4 The Council's Local Housing Strategy "People, Property, and Places" has the following aim:

"To provide good quality, well managed houses in communities where people want to live, and offer people housing choices which meet their needs and aspirations."

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 As part of the Council's commitment to tenants outlined in the Offer Document the Council created a suite of funds designed to engage and support the local community in the helping to transform homes, lives and communities. The funds created include, the Local Employment Fund, a Community Improvement Fund and a Community Safety Initiative Fund.
- 4.2 The Local Employment Fund of £50,000 per annum for 5 years was created as a means to encourage the development of community projects designed to support unemployed / inactive tenants into work. A number of proposals have been received from existing organisations and programmes.
- 4.3 A commitment for 2013/14 was agreed in principle by the WHQS Project Board earlier this year to finance up to £10,000 towards the costs associated with the creation of the Bargoed Jobshop. Unfortunately, the project did not come to fruition however subsequently the Board agreed that in principle, the allocation would be used to part finance the refurbishment of Hafod Deg (a building formerly owned by Social Services in the High Street, Rhymney) into a multi agency resource centre hosting Communities First, Jobcentre Plus, the CAB and Community Education.
- 4.4 The contribution of monies from the Local Employment Fund to part finance the refurbishment of Hafod Deg will result in the ability of Tenant Liaison Officers, Area Housing staff and Tenancy Support Officers to make direct referrals on behalf of tenants to the agencies housed within the building thereby enabling a greater level of support to be provided to tenants residing within the Upper Rhymney Valley. It also complements the multi agency approach underway within Rowan Place.
- 4.5 A request for funding from the Local Employment Fund has also been received from the White Rose Resource Centre who have been successful in securing a Flexible Support Fund grant from Jobcentre Plus to run an 5 month employment support programme for young people in the Upper Rhymney Valley.
- 4.6 The proposal focuses on addressing the motivation for work and preparing young people with the right attitude to secure long-term sustainable employment. The Flexible Support Funding will support the employment of an individual key worker to engage and support young people through a 4 week programme of activities to prepare young people for the world of work. This will include 1 day a week attending activities to focus young people on their long term future prospects, value of money and the benefit of work, and 2 days a week of bespoke activities which are interesting, engaging and relevant to the need of the individuals. The key worker will coordinate this for each young person, working closely with services in Caerphilly.
- 4.7 The key worker will be the lead contact for the young people, providing one to one coaching outside of the activities to build confidence, motivation and raise aspirations, including support to attend careers guidance interviews and youth hub where appropriate.
- 4.8 An important part of the project is to promote the benefits of work to young people and to generate an enthusiasm for the opportunities available. White Rose Resource Centre in collaboration with CCBC's Community Regeneration Team and Communities First aim to do this by also working with Communities 2.0 and the Get Caerphilly Online initiative, to encourage young people to tweet, blog and update their social media channels about the activities and experiences they participate in. A dedicated workshop will be held weekly to reflect on the week and develop digital technology skills and media outlets. This could be a forum in which to engage young tenants and young people in the WHQS programme.
- 4.9 The project will take referrals directly from Tenant Liaison Officers, Area Housing staff and Tenancy Support Officers thereby ensuring that young people living within our most deprived housing estates are engaged and supported.

- 4.10 As the young people leave the programme they will be supported by Communities First into the Passport Programme, onto a Jobs Growth Wales placement and into a placement / apprenticeship / employment opportunity either with the Council, LSB partner organisations or with a contractor appointed as a result of the WHQS programme.
- 4.11 The White Rose Resource Centre have successfully secured funds to deliver the project for 5 months, through the support of Communities First they are able to extend it to 6 months and through securing support through the Local Employment Fund the project could be extended by a further 6 months. This will allow sufficient time for referrals to be made, interventions to be undertaken and an evaluation of the outcomes achieved to be researched. The CHTG are therefore asked to consider utilising funds from the Local Employment Fund to support a six month extension of the project.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 An EqlA screening has been completed in accordance with the Council's Equalities Consultation and Monitoring Guidance and no potential for unlawful discrimination and for low level or minor negative impact have been identified, therefore a full EqlA has not been carried out.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The annual budget attributed to the Local Employment Fund is £50,000 per annum.
- 6.2 Approval to support the refurbishment of Hafod Deg and the extension of the White Rose Resource Centre Young Persons project will result in a commitment from the 2013/14 allocation of £20,000.00 (£10,000 per project) and an under spend of £30,000.00.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no personnel implications arising from the proposals in the report.

8. CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 All comments received as a result of the consultation have been incorporated into the report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 The Cabinet Sub Committee give:
- 9.2 Approval to finance the proposed 6 month extension to the White Rose Resource Centre Young Persons project is granted.
- 9.3 To endorse the allocation of £10,000 towards the refurbishment costs of Hafod Deg agreed in principle by the WHQS Project Board.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 To help deliver the Council's ambition of not only transforming homes but also lives and communities as a result of the WHQS investment.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 Local Government Act 2000. This is a Cabinet Sub Committee function.

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