



CAERPHILLY HOMES TASK GROUP – 5TH SEPTEMBER 2013

SUBJECT: COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT FUND

REPORT BY: INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek approval for two applications that have been received from community groups seeking funding from the Community Improvement Fund.

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 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 Community Improvement Fund that has been designed specifically to foster community development and cohesion by enabling community groups to bid for funding to support local initiatives and projects. 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 The Community Improvement Fund will provide a capital grant of up to £5,000 per project proposal. The grant must be spent within one year of the approval.
- 2.4 A maximum of £50,000 will be approved annually for multiple projects.
- 2.5 The Fund is intended to benefit community groups that are based within Caerphilly county borough and provide direct benefits to tenants and residents of the county borough.
- 2.6 Groups wishing to apply for funding need to be constituted and have a group bank account. New or emerging community groups need to partner with a constituted group / organisation who can apply for and administer any grant awarded on their behalf.
- 2.7 Groups also need to demonstrate that they have consulted with and engaged the local community in developing their project. The Community Improvement Fund will not support groups / projects that do not have the support of the community and will not benefit the wider community.

- 2.8 Grant funding awarded from the Community Improvement Fund can be used to improve the general appearance of estates, to provide new or improved parking, better lighting, planting, landscaping, or play areas. It could also be used by the local community to better increase their understanding of the needs of their area and to encourage greater participation in community activities.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 The Welsh Housing Quality Standard (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.
- 3.4 Relevant policy documents include the National Housing Strategy “Sustainable Homes” WAG; the Council’s Community Strategy; Corporate Improvement Plan; Safer Caerphilly Community Safety Plan; Regeneration Strategy; Children and Young People’s Plan; Tackling Poverty Action Plan 2012-2016 and Building Resilient Communities.
- 3.5 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 The first application for monies from the Community Improvement Fund to consider is from Britannia Community Association, 1 Farm View, Britannia, Blackwood.
- 4.2 The Britannia Community Association has leased 1 Farm View from Caerphilly County Borough Council since 2008 for use as a Community House. From this location the Association provides a number of community facilities and resources for local tenants and residents including weekly workclubs, an under 10’s club, summer play schemes, police drop in sessions and community education provision.
- 4.3 A grant of £2,300.00 is sought from the Community improvement Fund to finance improvements to the front and back garden areas of the property in order to develop a community garden in which to grow vegetables etc for local residents and also improve safety and access to the front garden area.
- 4.4 The majority of properties within the area have incredibly steep gardens which make them unsuitable for cultivation and inaccessible to some residents who may wish to grow fruit and vegetables. The rear garden of the Community House includes a relatively flat area which is ideal for creating raised beds and growing fruit and vegetables. A grant is sought to create raised beds, lay a concrete path to facilitate disabled access to the area and purchase plants and equipment necessary to grow fruit and vegetables. The creation of raised beds and the cultivation of the area will provide an opportunity for various generations to work together in order to share skills, increase knowledge and encourage greater community participation and involvement.
- 4.5 Monies awarded from the Community Improvement Fund would also be used to deliver safety improvements to the front of the property where there is currently a drop of approximately 5 feet. Improvements would include new fencing to prevent falls and a new gravel area where parents can leave push chairs etc when using the house.

- 4.6 The project is coterminous with the Communities First priorities of creating both healthier and learning communities. The Chair person has consulted with the Communities First Cluster Manager for Mid Valleys East who has endorsed the project.
- 4.7 The Britannia Community Association has sought the views of the local community and have received overwhelming support for the project from members of the under 10's club who have taken part in activities to illustrate their thoughts as to what improvements they would like to see delivered and also their parents who view the Community House as an important community resource.
- 4.8 The project will be delivered in partnership with Groundwork Caerphilly and the Caerphilly's Youth Offending Team.
- 4.9 Members of the Britannia Community Association together with users of the facility will maintain the improvements undertaken.
- 4.10 The second application for consideration is from Graig Y Rhacca Resource Centre who are seeking funding to finance the refurbishment of the former police station located at the centre of the Graig Y Rhacca housing estate.
- 4.11 The police have relocated their service from the retail centre of Graig Y Rhacca into the Graig Y Rhacca Resource Centre which has resulted in a vacant unit now being available along the main thoroughfare in the centre of Graig Y Rhacca. The Graig Y Rhacca Resource Centre are currently in discussions with Gwent Police and the housing service on becoming the new tenant in order to relocate 'Ann's Kitchen', a community cafe and social enterprise into the former police station in order to offer an enhanced community resource offering tenants and residents the opportunity to develop new skills and qualifications in order to better prepare them for employment.
- 4.12 Monies awarded from the Community Improvement Fund would be used to finance the relocation and expansion of Ann's Kitchen (named in memory of Ann Henderson who was a local community champion) which is currently based at the Resource Centre into the former police station thereby enhancing the community offer through providing not only an extended cafe area but also a buffet and sandwich delivery service that will create training, work placements and employment opportunities for local people as well as acting as a hub for the local community thereby fostering greater community cohesion and involvement.
- 4.13 The total cost of refurbishing the property is estimated to be £7856.40. One cost estimate has been provided and another has been requested (two estimates are required). A contribution of £5,000 is sought from the Community Improvement Fund within the remaining £2856.40 being provided as match funding from the Resource Centre.
- 4.14 The project is coterminous with each of the three Communities First priorities; creating healthier communities, learning communities and prosperous communities.
- 4.15 The project is being delivered in partnership with Communities First, Caerphilly Housing, the Passport Programme, Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations, Gwent Police, Wales Coop and the Council's Business Enterprise Support Scheme.
- 4.16 There is evidence of support for the project from within the local community. The creation of a community cafe is advocated within the Local Action Plan, a feasibility study undertaken by 'Creation Consultants' and consultations with Gwent Police. The existing community cafe within the Resource Centre has been hugely successful. The local Communities First Cluster Manager has endorsed the project proposal.
- 4.17 CCBC Property division have advised that a lease on the former police station to Graig Y Rhacca Resource Centre has not yet been offered. A change of use has also not yet been granted.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 An EqIA 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 EqIA has not been carried out.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Community Improvement Fund provides a capital grant to community groups of up to £5,000 to support community projects that meet one or more of the Communities First priorities and add value to the WHQS programme through improving the appearance of communities, amenities within communities and / or increasing participation by communities throughout the county borough.
- 6.2 An annual budget of £50,000 per annum is available.
- 6.3 The proposal from Britannia Community Association seeks a grant of £2,300.00.
- 6.4 The proposal from Graig Y Rhacca Resource Centre seeks a grant of £5,000.00.
- 6.5 There are sufficient monies available within the Community Improvement Fund to approve both applications.
- 6.6 Payments are made in arrears upon receipt of invoices.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

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

8. CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 Support for both projects has been received from those consulted.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 The Task Group recommend to the Cabinet Sub Committee that:
- 9.1.2 Funding to support to redevelopment of the Britannia Community Association gardens is approved subject to:
- a) Receipt of confirmation that approval has been obtained from CCBC Housing for the improvements proposed
 - b) Receipt of two written quotes from appropriate suppliers for the materials / equipment required
- 9.2.2 Funding for the refurbishment of the former Graig Y Rhacca police station into an expanded community cafe providing healthy food, training and employment for the local community is approved subject to:
- a) Confirmation that a lease has been granted by CCBC to the Graig Y Rhacca Resource Centre
 - b) Confirmation that a change of use has been approved

- c) Receipt of a second comparable quote for the works to be undertaken

10. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 To deliver and meet the aims and objectives of the WHQS Programme.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 Housing Acts and Local Government Acts. This is a Cabinet Sub Committee function.

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Consultees: Cllr. Gerald Jones, Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Housing
Cllr. Keith Reynolds, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Corporate Services
Cllr Ken James, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning & Sustainable Development
Cllr Kevin Dawson, Ward Member, Pengam
Cllr David Poole, Cabinet Member for Community & Leisure Services / Ward Member for Pengam
Cllr Elizabeth Aldworth, Ward Member for Bedwas, Trethomas and Machen
Cllr Ray Davies, Chair of the CHTG / Ward Member for Bedwas, Trethomas and Machen
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