



CAERPHILLY HOMES TASK GROUP – 5TH DECEMBER 2013

SUBJECT: COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT FUND

REPORT BY: INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To seek approval to grant fund a proposal received from the Oaklands Hall Community Association 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 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.

- 2.9 Funding from the Community Improvement Fund is sought from the Oaklands Hall Allotments Association based in Bargoed.

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.
- 3.3 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.
- 3.4 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 The CHTG is asked to consider an application for monies from the Community Improvement Fund by Oaklands Hall Allotments Association, Bargoed who are seeking £4750.00 to re-roof two of the communal buildings within the allotment site to enable them to be used for community activities during poor weather.
- 4.2 The existing roofs are in poor condition and leak badly during bad weather. During the last 12 months numerous community based activities at the allotment site have needed to be cancelled.
- 4.3 The Oaklands Hall Allotment Society actively works with organisations such as Keep Wales Tidy, the Wildlife Trust to promote biodiversity and awareness through activities based at the site and also directly supports Park Primary School through encouraging school gardening projects and a not for profit gardening supplies shop. Oaklands Hall Allotment Society also schedule regular community events which are open to all members of the community including bird box building weekends and Bat Watch activities.
- 4.4 The organisation is supported by 32 dedicated volunteers and works in partnership with conservation agencies such as Keep Wales Tidy, the Wildlife Trust and are members of both the Rhymney Valley Allotments Society and the National Allotments Society.
- 4.5 If approved the project will start on 5th January 2014 and be completed by 19th January 2014.
- 4.6 The application for funding is supported by CCBC’s Assistant Biodiversity Officer and the local Communities First Cluster Manager.
- 4.7 The Senior Area Planning Officer for the area has confirmed that planning consent is not required.

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 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 Oaklands Hall Allotments Association has requested a grant of £4,750.00 inclusive of VAT.
- 6.4 There are sufficient monies available within the Community Improvement Fund to approve the application.
- 6.5 Payments are made in arrears upon receipt of invoices.
- 6.6 To date £7,300.00 of the CIF funding has been committed.
- 6.7 If the Oaklands Hall Allotment proposal is approved £12,050.00 will have been committed from the Community Improvement Fund.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no personnel implications arising from 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 Task Group recommend to the Cabinet Sub Committee that funding to support the replacement of the roofs at Oaklands Allotments Association is approved.

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.

Author: Jane Roberts-Waite, Strategic Coordination Manager (WHQS)
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 Tudor Davies, Ward Member Bargoed
Cllr David Carter, Ward Member, Bargoed
Cllr Diane Price, Ward Member, Bargoed
Phil Davy, Head of Programmes

Shaun Couzens, Chief Housing Officer
Dan Perkins, Head of Legal Services
Nicole Scammell, Acting Director of Corporate Services and S151 Officer
Tina McMahon, Community Regeneration Manager
Gail Williams, Monitoring Officer