



## CAERPHILLY HOMES TASK GROUP – 22ND MAY 2014

**SUBJECT: COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT FUND**

**REPORT BY: INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

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### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report has been drafted for consultation purposes. Members of the Task Group are requested to note the contents of the report and provide any comments or observations they may have to the report author / Head of Programmes (WHQS).
- 1.2 Funding decisions relating to the Community Improvement Fund will be made under delegated powers to the Head of Programmes (WHQS).

### 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 by the Rhymney Allotments Society.

### **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**

#### **Rhymney Allotments Society**

- 4.1 The CHTG is asked to consider an application from the Community Improvement Fund by Rhymney Allotments Society to improve access to the 25 plot allotment site located within the ward of Twyn Carno, the third most deprived ward within Caerphilly county borough. Access improvements proposed include; the installation of a handrail and ramp in order to improve access to tenants and residents with mobility difficulties and the tarmacing / concreting of existing pathways as per the Permission for Development approval given by the Local Planning Authority dated 11<sup>th</sup> February 2014.
- 4.2 Rhymney Allotments Society have secured a 25 year lease from Caerphilly County Borough Council dated 11<sup>th</sup> July 2013. Confirmation of permission to undertake the proposed works is pending.
- 4.3 Existing footpaths consist of either mud or shale which are overgrown and prevent access by all members of the community.
- 4.4 Rhymney Allotments Society work closely with Communities First, Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations and Flying Start in order to promote the importance of fresh food and access to locally grown food thereby encouraging healthy eating in one of the borough’s most deprived areas.
- 4.5 The organisation is supported by 25 dedicated volunteers who oversee the day to day running and management of the Allotment Society.

- 4.6 The allotments are utilised both by individuals and community groups. Communities First have a dedicated plot which is used by Bryn Awel Primary School, members of the GWERIN day care centre (support for adults with learning difficulties) and Rhymney Sports and Social Club (support group for adults). Flying Start also have a dedicated allotment plot which is used by children and families to help children understand how food is grown, the importance of locally grown food, health eating and cooking on a budget and the importance of adopting a healthy lifestyle.
- 4.7 Planning permission for the improvements proposed has been obtained. Two quotes from contractors have also been supplied as per the requirements of the Fund. Photographs of the area are contained in appendix 1.
- 4.8 There is considerable community support for the project. Letters of support have been received from members of the Allotment Society and parents and children involved in the Flying Start programme. The local Communities First Cluster Manager is supportive of the proposal.
- 4.9 The Rhymney Allotments Society have confirmed in their application for funding that they will be responsible for the future maintenance of the work undertaken.
- 4.10 The total cost of the project is £5580.00. The Association have secured £580.00 from the Welsh Church Fund hence the contribution required from the Community Improvement Fund is £5,000.00.

## **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 Rhymney Allotments Society has requested a grant of £5,000.00 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.

## **7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

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

## **8. CONSULTATIONS**

8.1 The local ward member supports the application.

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

9.1 That the task group consider the contents of the report and provide comments to the report Author / Head of Programmes.

## **10. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

## **11. STATUTORY POWER**

11.1 Local Government Act 2000.

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  
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Shaun Couzens, Chief Housing Officer  
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Tina McMahon, Community Regeneration Manager  
Gail Williams, Principal Solicitor

Appendices:

Appendix 1 Rhymney Allotments Photographs