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Date: 25th May 2016

Dear Sir/Madam,

A meeting of the **Cabinet** will be held in the **Sirhowy Room, Penallta House, Tredomen, Ystrad Mynach** on **Wednesday, 1st June, 2016** at **2.00 pm** to consider the matters contained in the following agenda.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Chris Burns'.

Chris Burns
INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE

A G E N D A

	Pages
1 To receive apologies for absence.	
2 Declarations of Interest.	

Councillors and Officers are reminded of their personal responsibility to declare any personal and/or prejudicial interest(s) in respect of any item of business on the agenda in accordance with the Local Government Act 2000, the Council's Constitution and the Code of Conduct for both Councillors and Officers.

To approve and sign the following minutes: -

- 3 Cabinet held on 18th May 2016.

1 - 2

A greener place Man gwyrddach



To receive and consider the following reports on which executive decisions are required: -

4	Regeneration and Planning Division Capital Allocation 2016/17.	3 - 12
5	Provision of Additional Supported Temporary Accommodation - Llys Tabernacle, Rhymney.	13 - 18
6	Tenant Participation Strategy 2016 - 2019.	19 - 28
7	Housing Repairs - Review of Recharge Discount.	29 - 34
8	Voluntary Sector Grants Capital Allocation 2016/17.	35 - 42

Circulation:

Councillors Mrs C. Forehead, N. George, D.T. Hardacre, D. Havard, K. James, Mrs B. A. Jones, D.V. Poole, K.V. Reynolds, T.J. Williams and R. Woodyatt,

And Appropriate Officers.



CABINET

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, TREDOMEN ON WEDNESDAY 18TH MAY 2016 AT 2.00 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor K. V. Reynolds – Chair

Councillors:

C. Forehead (Human Resources and Governance/Business Manager), N. George (Community and Leisure Services), D.T. Hardacre (Performance and Asset Management), D. Havard (Education and Lifelong Learning), B. Jones (Corporate Services), D. Poole (Housing), T.J. Williams (Highways, Transportation and Engineering) and R. Woodyatt (Social Services).

Together with:

C. HARRY (Corporate Director Communities) and N. Scammel (Acting Director of Corporate Services and Section 151).

Also in Attendance:

C. Jones (Head of Performance and Property Services), R. Roberts (Performance Manager) and C. Evans (Committee Services Officer).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor K. James (Regeneration, Planning and Sustainable Development), C. Burns (Interim Chief Executive) and D. Street (Corporate Director – Social Services).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations received at the beginning or during the course of the meeting.

3. CABINET – 13TH APRIL 2016

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 13th April 2016 (minute nos. 1 - 5) be approved and signed as a correct record.

RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

4. CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL, DRAFT 2016/17 CORPORATE PLAN (WELL-BEING OBJECTIVES).

The report presented Cabinet with the Council's draft Corporate Plan for 2016/17 and sought the views and approval of Cabinet prior to its presentation to Council on 7th June 2016.

Members noted that the Council is required to set new or review their existing Improvement Objectives to ensure they remain relevant and current for the public. The report detailed the outcome of this process and identified the recommended set of Objectives for 2016/17.

The Local Government Measure 2009 requires all local authorities in Wales to set and publish a set of priorities called Improvement Objectives. The introduction of the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 (FGA) also places a legal requirement for public bodies to set and publish 'Well-being Objectives' with effect from March 2017. This means there will be a cross over period in the completion of the 16/17 set of objectives and the setting of new Well-being Objectives 17/18.

Therefore, the Improvement Objectives have been reviewed and mapped to show how they contribute to the seven Well-being goals within the Well-being of Future Generations Act and as a result, the Improvement Objectives have been renamed Well-being Objectives in advance of the new legislation deadline. However, Cabinet were asked to note that it is recognised that in moving to a new way of working, setting objectives is more than a name change and we will develop that further in this transition year in readiness for March 2017.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendation in the report be approved. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RECOMMENDED that for the reasons contained in the Officers report and subject to reference to the Anti-Poverty Strategy being included within the document, the draft Corporate Plan which details the Well-being Objectives for 2016/17 be endorsed and recommended to Council for approval.

The meeting closed at 2.15pm

Approved and signed as a correct record subject to any corrections made at the meeting held on 1st June 2016.

CHAIR



CABINET – 1ST JUNE 2016

SUBJECT: REGENERATION AND PLANNING DIVISION CAPITAL ALLOCATION 2016/17

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR COMMUNITIES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek Cabinet approval for the 2016/17 capital budget allocation to Regeneration and Planning as required in section 4.8.2 and table 10 of the Budget Proposals 2016/17 and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2016/2021 which was approved by Full Council on the 24th February 2016.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Budget Proposals 2016/17 and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2016/2021 report (subsequently referred to as the Full Council Budget report) details the capital budget allocation to each service area for 2016/17. It also gives an indicative allocation for 2017/18 and 2018/19. Section 4.8.2 of the Full Council Budget Report outlines the requirement for further review and or business cases to be presented to Cabinet in order to justify the capital allocation to three service areas within the Regeneration and Planning Division.
- 2.2 Following consultation with Interim Head of Finance, this report only seeks approval of capital funding for 2016/17. Subsequent years indicative capital budget allocations are to be considered on an annual basis
- 2.4 The report briefly outlines how Commercial & Industrial Grants could merge with the existing Business Grants programme to develop a new grant regime aimed at start up businesses and economic prosperity. This new grant regime would commence in 2017/18.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 The budget setting process encompasses all the capital resources used by the Regeneration and Planning Department to deliver services.
- 3.2 The scheme supports the Single Integrated Plan, Caerphilly Delivers, and in particular contributes to the Prosperous, Healthier, and Greener Caerphilly themes.
- 3.3 The budget allocations have a positive impact upon the social, economic, and environmental well-being of the area or community concerned. In particular the scheme contributes to the following Well-being Goals within the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015:
 - A sustainable Wales
 - A prosperous Wales
 - A more equal Wales

- A Wales of cohesive communities

4. THE REPORT

Background

- 4.1 In order to prepare the capital budget for 2016/17 onwards in Autumn 2015, the Council's Finance Section sought bids from each service area with a capital programme. These bids are traditionally discussed with the Divisional accountants before being submitted to the Head of Finance. The bids concentrate on the 2016/17 financial year but also identified allocations required for a further two year period.
- 4.2 Regeneration and Planning Officers, in consultation with Finance Officers have submitted bids for 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19 following the same protocol that it has adhered to in previous years.
- 4.3 The capital programme 2016-18 is set out Appendix 6 of the Full Council Budget Report which was approved by Council on February 24th 2016. However, the report identifies that the capital allocation for five projects within the Regeneration and Planning Division are provisional and require further review and/or business cases to go before Cabinet in order to release funds to the service area.
- 4.4 Section 4.8.2 of the Budget report states:

"The proposals in Table 10 below have been provisionally included in the proposed Capital Programme. However, these proposals will require further review and/or business cases to justify seeking Cabinet approval to release the funds to the service area".

- 4.5 Table 10 of the Full Council Budget Report identifies the following project areas

Service Area	Description	2016/17 £000's	2017/18 £000's	2018/19 £000's
Countryside	Environmental Schemes	217	230	232
Economic Dev	Voluntary Sector Capital Grants	170	0	0
Urban Renewal	Commercial and Industrial Grants	50	50	50
Urban Renewal	Town Centres	30	40	20
Urban Renewal	Navigation Colliery Site Regeneration	0	20	20
Total		467	340	322

- 4.6 The Interim Head of Finance has advised that the process to be followed is for the submission of the relevant information/business cases for 2016/17 to CMT for approval before being considered by Cabinet. Subsequent years indicative capital budget allocations are to be considered on an annual basis.
- 4.7 The following provides a summary of each of the five project areas identified in the table above.

Countryside - Environmental Schemes (2016/17 bid £217,000)

- 4.8 The Countryside and Landscape Services Section are responsible for managing a wide portfolio of land and facilities including five Country Parks, a number of former colliery tips and a National Nature Reserve at Aberbargoed. Traditionally this budget has been utilised to successfully attract significant amounts of grant aid. This support comes from bodies including Natural Resources Wales, European Union and Welsh Government and typically provides between 50% and 90% of project costs and this continues to be the case. It is the intention to utilise this budget to match fund both secured and future grants. This funding assists in generating income and fees to the Council and facilitates implementing projects with a range of partners.
- 4.9 Effectively the Environmental Scheme programme is split into five components:-
- **Country Parks (£60,000)** - A series of enhancements and support works at Parc Cwm Darran, Pen y Fan, Parc Coed Tir Bargoed, Sirhowy Valley and Penallta Country Parks. The wider programme also supports the implementation of a range of strategies and where possible is to be used as potential match funding to attract additional investment, notably from the EU and Rural Development Programme.
 - **Education and Understanding (£25,000)** - Works associated with the on-going development of the Aberbargoed Grasslands National Nature Reserve along with the continued development of the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal - Crumlin Arm and a range of interpretive and understanding projects across the whole of the County borough. The projects help secure the implementation of the Interpretation Strategy and promote understanding of our increasing environmental obligations.
 - **Access (£10,000)** - The continued improvement and development of the Riverside Walks, strategic tourism routes and long distance bridleway proposal. The funding assists with implementing the recommendations contained within Landscape Crime Toolkit to reduce damage to the countryside.
 - **Landscape Enhancement (£72,000)** - Projects associated with the continued management, improvement and enhancement of land, particularly the large areas that are directly controlled by Countryside and Landscape Services. Emphasis is placed on land and facilities with liabilities and significant sums of grant aid are normally attracted to support these works given the important implications for natural heritage, inward investment and culture.
 - **Derelict Land (£50,000)** - Includes projects required to manage previously reclaimed land and land awaiting reclamation comprising former colliery sites and disused railways. Sites include McLaren, Phillipstown, Machen and Markham tips amongst others. Part funding contributes towards proactive works such as implementing the recommendations of the Landscape Study of Aberbargoed Tip whilst the majority addresses direct damage and site liability to both land and structures such as washouts and stability.

Economic Development - Voluntary Sector Capital Grants (2016/17 bid £170,000)

- 4.10 The Voluntary Sector Capital budget has most recently been used to operate a grant scheme for the community/voluntary sector across the whole of Caerphilly County Borough, known as the Community Regeneration Fund.
- 4.11 Subsequent to the approval of the Full Council Budget Report of the 24th February responsibility for the Voluntary Sector Capital Grants budget has moved from Regeneration and Planning to Public Protection, with effect from 1st April 2016. Consequently, the Head of Public Protection has prepared a separate report on the release of this capital budget and it will therefore not be considered in this report.

Urban Renewal – Commercial and Industrial Grants (2016/17 bid £50,000)

- 4.12 The Urban Renewal Team has traditionally operated a Commercial and Industrial Grant (CIG) Scheme for private commercial property owners which has allowed for improvements to their properties in town and village centres throughout the county borough. Capital Grant aid has been available for the conversion, extension, improvement or modification of existing commercial or industrial buildings, and the conversion of other buildings into commercial, industrial or community use. Funding of up to 50% of the costs of improvement works has been available. The grant recipient must contribute the remaining funding and there is a maximum Council contribution of £15,000 per grant to ensure the small budget can be used to best effect throughout the county borough.
- 4.13 The aim of the £50,000 budget has been to encourage a high standard of environmental enhancements to commercial buildings within target areas of the Borough. It also concentrates on safeguarding existing jobs and creating new ones along with helping to bring vacant or derelict buildings back into viable economic use. These measures help stabilise the economic life of the area, restore business confidence and encourage investment. Businesses are assisted to expand and prosper, thereby protecting existing jobs and generating new ones.
- 4.14 The budget has funded a programme that has helped lever in private investment into town centres in order to bolster the overall town centre offer. 30 Expressions of Interest have been submitted to the Council in the last 12 months and 4 applications are currently prioritised for funding but are on hold pending the outcome of this report.
- 4.15 It is the intention in 2017/18 to merge the existing Commercial and Industrial Grant with the Business Development Grants currently being offered within the same department and this is referred to in more detail later in this report.
- 4.16 Whilst this review is undertaken, it is proposed that the existing CIG regime will continue. Currently there are four applications received in the last quarter of 2015/16 being assessed and are in an advanced stage in the internal verification process.
- 4.17 The residual 2015/16 capital budget of circa £32K remains to be confirmed as ring-fenced and carried forward and the 2016/17 capital budget bid for £50K is yet to be released. If the carry forward is confirmed it will be used to grant aid the costs associated with these four applications. The £50k allocation for 16/17 will then be utilised towards these grants and prioritise a further three to five grants from the 30 Expressions of Interests on the Council's database.

Urban Renewal - Town Centres (2016/17 bid £30,000)

- 4.18 The Urban Renewal Section have traditionally been active in the towns and villages of the county borough, undertaking small scale improvement projects aimed at enhancing the urban fabric. These schemes have been taken forward in conjunction with local community groups to make a positive impact in their community. Project ideas are often initiated from within the community which are developed and implemented in partnership.
- 4.19 At the time of the budget bids for 2016/17 proposals several projects were being developed within the section. The request for capital funding focused on two particular projects:
- ***Abertridwr Improvement Programme (£16,000)*** - Urban Renewal officers are working with the local Member, Communities First and Groundwork Caerphilly staff to develop a project that improves a small derelict council owned site. Funding is required to make the site secure and to undertake preparatory works to aid development of designs to bid for external grant funding. It is anticipated that additional outputs will include skills training for local people, and community empowerment.

- **Bute Town, Rhymney HLF bid (£24,000)** – A longstanding concern for the Council is the condition of the properties following a Council led improvement scheme in the early 1970's. Various reports have been submitted to Cabinet/Council and it was agreed to submit a Heritage Lottery Bid (HLF) for the villagers most of whom are now home owners. The Urban Renewal Team was successful in securing a Heritage Lottery Fund Townscape Heritage Round One Development Grant in 2013 for a heritage and environmental project in Bute Town. The project proposals included the restoration works to the 44 listed residential properties and St Aidens Church's defective roofs and associated repairs, as well as sensitive landscape and public realm enhancements. A Stage Two HLF Bid for implementation funding was to be submitted in December 2015 but due to an inability to secure the necessary match funding has since been withdrawn. Monies had been earmarked in the Urban Renewal capital bid to act as match for the project. It is proposed that these funds are now made available for 2016/17 to support the local residents to collectively take action to improve their own properties. A recent "drop-in" session organised by the Council was very productive and residents are now keen to undertake the necessary works to ensure their properties are watertight.

Architectural consultants employed by the Council back in 2007, at the time advised in their "Delivery Strategy" that there was a very strong feeling amongst residents that they should not fund the defects themselves, because of the defective materials and design faults (as they see it) of the original renovation contract administered by the Council's predecessor in the 1970s, and the fact that the Council inherited the responsibilities of Mid Glamorgan for the County Borough Area. Although it has long been established that any legal claim against Mid Glamorgan or Caerphilly is now statute barred, the strong views of residents continue to this day with a consensus that the Council has a moral obligation, if not a legal requirement, to help. There is a natural and understandable sense of disappointment and frustration from residents at the decision not to progress with a Stage 2 HLF bid.

With Planning and Listed Building Consent now secured on behalf of residents, many have indicated that they will now look into employing contractors to carry out the essential repair works and are investigating all options for finance, including housing grants and historic building grants. The 2013 Report to Regeneration & Environment Scrutiny Committee recommended that the Council contribute £23,976.23 to the overall expected restoration funding package to match the anticipated contribution from residents. This request was never followed up with a CMT or Cabinet report but did form part of the Urban Renewal section's initial capital bid for 2016/17. It is requested that amount of funding now be made available in 2016/2017 to provide an essential financial contribution to the anticipated building restoration & improvement works.

The Urban Renewal Team will work with the Council's Private Housing Team and Conservation Officer to offer a co-ordinated approach to resolving the long standing issue of the defective Bute Town roofs. Working collectively, economies of scale could be achieved that will bring real cost savings to the owners.

- 4.20 If either of the identified schemes fail to progress or if they do not exhaust the full allocation, the residual budget will be used to implement appropriate proposals set out in existing Town Centre Action Plans which have been adopted by the Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance. Appendix 1 details potential projects.

New Grant Regime

- 4.21 As outlined earlier, officers are examining the possibility of combining the existing grants offered to businesses into one Business Support Grant that could be launched at the start of the 2017/18 financial year. The outcome of this review will be considered later this year under a separate report.

- 4.22 It is considered that a combined Business Growth grant will be better placed to offer support to start up businesses, encourage economic growth and stimulate job creation.
- 4.23 There is already synergy between the two grant regimes. The table below outlines the overarching criteria that each is based on. The bolded text shows where the synergy exists

Business Support Grants	Commercial Improvement Grants
Sector eligibility – primarily manufacturing and businesses servicing that sector, with additional focus on benefits in key local employment sectors	Town centre benefits
Job creation and safeguarding	Job creation and safeguarding
Investment – increase in turnover and additional private sector funding levered in	Funding levered in
Value for money	Value for money
Location in a deprived area	Environmental impact
Existence of or working towards company policies on Equalities and Environment	Deliverability
	Business viability, required consents and quotations
	Improvements to the condition of the property

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 An EqIA screening has been completed in accordance with the Council's Strategic Equality Plan and supplementary guidance and no potential for unlawful discrimination and/or low level or minor negative impact have been identified, therefore a full EqIA has not been carried out.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Full Council Budget Report requires Cabinet to approve the provisional allocation in order for it to be released to the Regeneration and Planning Division.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no direct personnel implications with this report

8. CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 The report has been sent to the consultees listed below and all consultation responses have been reflected in this report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 in accordance with the Full Council Budget Report, Cabinet approval is sought to award:
- i) The 2016/17 capital allocation of £217,000 to Countryside's Environmental Schemes Programme.
 - ii) The 2016/17 capital allocation of £50,000 to Urban Renewal to Commercial and Industrial Grants scheme.
 - iii) The 2016/17 capital allocation of £30,000 to Urban Renewal's Town Centres projects.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 To provide full justification for the provisional allocations within the Full Council Budget Report 2016/17 in order that Cabinet approve the release of funding to the Regeneration and Planning service area.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 Local Government Act 2000

Author:	David Whetter – Interim Head of Regeneration
Consultees:	
C Harrhy	Corporate Director Communities
N Scammell	Acting Director of Corporate Services
S R Harris	Interim Head of Corporate Finance
Gail Williams	Interim Head of Legal Services & Monitoring Officer
Mike Eedy	Finance Manager - Corporate Services
N Akhtar	Group Accountant
Rob Hartshorn	Head of Public Protection
Vicki Doyle	Policy Officer
Phil Griffiths	Countryside Manager
Antony Bolter	Business Support and Funding Manager
A Dallimore	Team Leader - Urban Renewal

Appendix 1: Extract of Schemes from Town Centre Action Plans

Background Papers: Regeneration & Environment Scrutiny Committee Report of 21 May 2013 - "Bute Town Rhymney – Heritage Lottery Fund – Townscape Heritage Fund Bid Opportunity"

Full Council 24th February 2016 - The Budget Proposals 2016/17 and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2016/2021 report

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EXTRACT OF SCHEMES FROM TOWN CENTRE ACTION PLANS

Proposal	Town Centre Action Plan	Indicative Costs
Undertake comprehensive enhancement of area surrounding Costa Coffee, principally to the side and rear, to include improvements to the pedestrian links between the High Street Car Park and High Street, re-surfacing to rear lanes and footways and erection of a commercial bin store. Project in conjunction with Highways	Blackwood	£20,000
Tree felling and crown reduction at Dafydd Williams Park to deal with elderly tree stock and facilitate development on Park Lane	Caerphilly	£25,000
Increase movement of pedestrians from the National Cycle Network and Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal to the town centre - principally the route along Station Place and Moriah Hill.	Risca	£20,000-£22,000
Part-funding towards costs of demolishing redundant toilet block, Pontymister	Risca	£25,000-£30,000
Installation of Feeder pillar to support events at Siloh Square	Ystrad Mynach	£5,000
Design works for Phase 2 of Riverside Park Community project	Newbridge	£15,000

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CABINET – 1ST JUNE 2016

SUBJECT: PROVISION OF ADDITIONAL SUPPORTED TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION - LLYS TABERNACLE, RHYMNEY

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR - COMMUNITIES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek Cabinet approval to enter into a partnership arrangement with Wales and West Housing Association in respect of the use of their premises at Llys Tabernacle, Rhymney for the purposes of supported accommodation for single homeless persons.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Council has a statutory duty to provide emergency accommodation for persons identified as being homeless and in priority need. Due to a lack of supported accommodation a number of single homeless persons have to date had to be placed into Bed and Breakfast (B&B) accommodation both within and outside the County Borough.
- 2.2 Since November 2014 the Authority has made a conscious effort to reduce its reliance on B&B accommodation for emergency housing. This has been done, in the main, by the creation and use of additional supported accommodation at Ty Croeso, Newbridge and Maes y Derwen, Tredomen which together have provided 28 rooms for use as emergency accommodation for single persons. Such provision provides greater support for homeless persons whilst at the same time affording the communities within which such accommodation is located a degree of reassurance in respect of any safety concerns they may have.
- 2.3 Currently the Authority has the use of 55 rooms within 4 units of accommodation which provide 24hr support. One of these units, the Countryman, Bedwellty which caters for 16 – 24 year olds, was recently the subject of a joint inspection by HM Inspectorate of Probation, Ofsted (Social Care) and the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CCSIW) Unfortunately their findings suggest the premises is no longer suitable for the placing of younger persons. There are also concerns about the physical condition of the property which, it is felt, will require substantial investment from its private owners for the property to have any realistic medium to long term use as emergency accommodation which is compliant with relevant statute. For these reasons officers feel that an alternative, better located, facility should be considered.
- 2.4 To this end a block of 13 self contained flats located at Llys Tabernacle, Church St., Rhymney, owned by Wales and West Housing Association, has been identified as being suitable for adaptation to a 12 room, 24hr supported housing scheme. The owners have already secured Planning permission for such a project which will be managed by the voluntary sector housing support organisation Solas. Solas currently manage the Countryman and Maes y Derwen and have a proven record locally of delivering high quality housing support.

- 2.5 This report seeks approval for the Authority to enter into a partnership arrangement with Wales and West Housing Association in respect of the use of their premises at Llys Tabernacle, Rhymney for the purposes of supported accommodation for single homeless persons. This project will act as a replacement for the Countryman.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 10 Year Homelessness Action Plan For Wales – 2009-2019, which sets out some guiding principles for the development and delivery of homelessness services.
- 3.2 Caerphilly Delivers: The Single Integrated Plan (2013-17); linking to the Prosperous, Safer Caerphilly and Healthier Caerphilly themes.
- 3.3 *People, Property & Places: A Housing Strategy for Caerphilly County Borough*, linking to aims 1 and 4.
- 3.4 Caerphilly Supporting People Local Commissioning Plan 2015-2018.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 For many years this Authority, along with many other Local Authorities, has used B&B accommodation as its main source of emergency accommodation for single persons. Until 2013 our only source of supported accommodation was the then family unit at Ty Croeso, Newbridge which at that time could accommodate up to 7 homeless families. In early 2013 Ty Croeso was closed following the completion of a brand new, 13 room family facility at Ty'r Fesen, Caerphilly. Ty'r Fesen is owned by United Welsh Housing Association (UWHA) and support is provided by the Authority's own staff that relocated from Ty Croeso.
- 4.2 Ty Croeso was then fully refurbished to a standard which complied with the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation (Wales) Order 2006 and when reopened in September 2014 it provided an additional 10 units of supported accommodation for use by single homeless persons. Supporting People tendered for an appropriate support provider to manage the scheme and The Wallich, a support provider active across Wales were successful in securing the contract and have managed Ty Croeso since it reopened. The Wallach also provide floating support to persons either in B&B or other temporary accommodation.
- 4.3 Alongside these facilities the Authority also had use of the Countryman, Bedwellty, a privately owned premises which has Planning consent specifically for use by homeless persons between the ages of 16-24. The Countryman has 14 rooms and support within this facility is provided by Solas. Solas were originally founded in 1983 to provide housing and support in Newport and now offer services across Wales. Solas is a member of the Pobl Group which comprises seven organisations, all of whose core mission is to provide housing and support, prevent social exclusion and develop the capabilities of the people it supports.
- 4.4 Despite having this level of supported accommodation, in late 2014 there were still between 30 – 35 single homeless persons in B&B accommodation and so officers were in discussion with United Welsh Housing Association (UWHA) with a view to creating another supported housing facility at an empty, former secure unit at Maes y Derwen Tredomen. This building had the potential to provide substantial additional accommodation and so UWHA purchased the building and thereafter converted it so as it now provides 18 units of single persons accommodation.
- 4.5 It is fair to say that the opening of Maes y Derwen has been of great assistance in the strive to reduce our reliance on B&B. Also, since the introduction of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, our Housing Advice team have been extremely pro-active in delivering the Authority's Homelessness Prevention agenda. This activity, together with the additional accommodation

provided by Maes y Derwen has now brought about a situation whereby at the end of the last quarter of 2015/16 we had 5 persons in B&B.

- 4.6. Whilst this situation is a great achievement, there are concerns regarding the ability of the Authority to continue its use of the Countryman. A recent inspection by HM Inspectorate of Probation, Ofsted (Social Care) and the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) was critical of the location of the premises and also of the practice of accommodating homeless 16/17 year olds alongside older clients (the premises caters for 16 - 24 yr olds). There are also concerns over the building's physical condition and its ability to now provide homelessness accommodation of an acceptable standard.
- 4.7 The situation with the Countryman is further complicated as Solas, the current support provider, have given notice that they also have concerns about the premises and no longer wish to continue as support provider. Solas have, however, given an assurance that they will continue as support provider until such time as The Authority can source a suitable alternative provision.
- 4.8 In response to the above, Officers within both Housing and Social Services have been investigating options for developing further supported housing schemes that would allow for homeless clients to be adequately accommodated and supported on a 24-hour basis for a temporary period before being rehoused permanently.
- 4.9 To this end a block of 13 self contained flats located at Llys Tabernacle, Church St., Rhymney, owned by Wales and West Housing Association, has been identified as being suitable for adaptation to a 24hr supported housing scheme. The premises is empty and the owners have already secured Planning permission for its conversion to a 12 room facility. If Members are minded to accept the recommendations in this report the intention is that it will be managed by Solas. As mentioned earlier Solas currently manage the Countryman and Maes y Derwen and have a proven record of delivering high quality housing support throughout the Gwent region.
- 4.10 The facility itself, once converted, will provide temporary accommodation for single homeless people referred by CCBC via the Housing Advice Team. Referrals to the accommodation will only be from those accepted as eligible Homeless and in priority need, who may require support. The accommodation at Llys Tabernacle will provide the Authority with a modern facility that will deliver a combination of independent and communal facilities. The proposed self-contained units will comprise of a lounge, bedroom, kitchen area and bath/shower room.
- 4.11 Solas will provide a 24/7 service at Llys Tabernacle with on-site support staff. In doing so, this will ensure support is delivered to the individuals, as well as providing a housing management service. All residents will be required to adhere to the terms of a License Agreement governing acceptable behaviour both inside and outside of the accommodation. Staff will monitor behaviour, access to the building, including visitors, in order to ensure the License Agreement is adhered to. The premises will be fitted with CCTV provision to assist Solas with their monitoring role.
- 4.12 Should Members support this proposal, Wales and West have indicated that the necessary conversion works can be completed before the year-end. It is intended that until the facility is ready for occupation that the Authority will continue to use the Countryman for the placement of 18 – 24 year old single homeless persons. However, to comply with the recommendations of the CSSIW report, 16/17 year olds will now be accommodated within a dedicated area of Maes y Derwen which can be closed off from other areas of the building.
- 4.13 Once all works have been completed, an opportunity will be provided for local residents to meet with support staff and have a look around the building. It is hoped this will facilitate the building of links with the community and provide an opportunity to allay any concerns the community may have.

- 4.14 It is accepted that the substitution of the Countryman for Llys Tabernacle will result in a reduction of 2 rooms within our overall available provision. However, Officers are actively seeking an additional, smaller facility for use as similar supported accommodation which will raise available room numbers to a level which should combat the need for future B&B use (although this cannot be absolutely guaranteed). A smaller facility will also reduce the incidence of void costs.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 An EIA screening has been completed in accordance with the Council's Strategic Equality Plan and supplementary guidance. This project is for the benefit of homeless persons whose individual needs are assessed and taken into account when dealing with their individual cases and placements are made in line with previously adopted allocations policies and procedures. No potential for unlawful discrimination has been identified, therefore a full EIA has not been carried out.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The costs of undertaking the conversion works to the premises are to be borne by Wales and West Housing Association who will recoup their costs via the annual leasing arrangement with Solas.
- 6.2 Housing Benefit will meet the rent and service charges for Solas' management of the scheme. The cost of the support will be met from Supporting People programme grant. However, the overall costs to the Supporting People programme will be offset by the Authority's withdrawal from the Countryman.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no personnel implications.

8. CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 The Ward Member, as a consultee, whilst fully supporting the Authority's efforts to reduce the use of B&B, sought clarification in respect of a number of issues regarding the proposed operation and management of the premises. The author responded accordingly and has satisfactorily addressed the matters raised by the Ward Member. No other consultees offered any comments.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 It is recommended that the Authority enters into a partnership arrangement with Wales and West Housing Association with a view to utilising Llys Tabernacle as an alternative supported Housing Project to the Countryman.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 To ensure the Authority retains a similar level of supported accommodation to that which is currently available.
- 10.2 To ensure that both homeless single people and the community are afforded maximum protection and support.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 Housing Act 1996, Housing(Wales) Act 2014.

Author: Kenyon Williams – Private Sector Housing Manager
Consultees: Christina HARRY – Corporate Director - Communities
Cllr. Dave Poole – Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Housing
Cllr. Carl Cuss – Ward Member Twyn Carno
Shaun Couzens – Chief Housing Officer
Suzanne Cousins – Principal Housing Officer (Housing Portfolio)
Claire Davies – Principal Housing Officer (Strategy and Standards)
Kevin Fortey – Housing Development Officer
Lee Clapham – Emergency Accommodation Manager
Malcolm Topping – Supporting People Manager
David Thomas – Corporate Equalities Officer
Gail Williams – Interim Head of Legal Services
Lesley Allen – Principal Accountant
Janine Edwards – Interim Service Manager, Social Services

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CABINET – 1ST JUNE 2016

SUBJECT: TENANT PARTICIPATION STRATEGY 2016 – 2019

REPORT BY: ACTING DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES AND SECTION 151 OFFICER

-
- 1.1 The report was considered by the Caerphilly Homes Task Group (CHTG) on 19th May 2016 which outlined the draft Tenant Participation Strategy (2016 – 19) and sought their views prior to its presentation to Cabinet for approval.
 - 1.2 Members were advised that the 2016-19 Strategy defines the purpose (the reason for Tenant Participation) and responds to the challenges and opportunities of the world within which Caerphilly Homes operates. The Strategy has been developed in consultation with tenants and staff (through a number of workshop and feedback sessions).
 - 1.3 Members noted the purpose of the Strategy, its 4 Key Objectives, along with information on how it was developed. The Strategy also referred to the development of an Action Plan to support the delivery of the strategic objectives over the next 3 years.
 - 1.4 Following full consideration of the Tenant Participation Strategy 2016 - 2019, CHTG fully supported the document and requested that Cabinet be informed of their endorsement. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that Cabinet be advised of the endorsement of The Caerphilly Homes Task Group for the Tenant Participation Strategy 2016-2019 as presented in Appendix 1 of the Officers Report.

- 1.5 Members are asked to consider the recommendation.

Author: C. Evans, Committee Services Officer, Ext. 4210

Appendices:

Appendix 1 Report to Caerphilly Homes Task Group – 19th May 2016

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CAERPHILLY HOMES TASK GROUP – 19TH MAY 2016

SUBJECT: TENANT PARTICIPATION STRATEGY 2016 - 2019

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR - COMMUNITIES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide the Caerphilly Homes Task Group (CHTG) with the draft Tenant Participation Strategy (2016 -19) and to seek views prior to the strategy being submitted to Cabinet for approval.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The 2016-19 Strategy defines our Purpose (the reason for tenant participation) and responds to the challenges and opportunities of the world within which Caerphilly Homes operates. The Strategy has been developed in consultation with tenants & staff (through a number of workshop and feedback sessions).
- 2.2 This report outlines the Purpose of the new Strategy, its 4 Key Objectives, along with information on how it was developed. The strategy also refers to the development of an Action Plan to support the delivery of the strategic objectives over the next 3 years.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, list 7 goals that provide a shared vision for public bodies to work towards. The goal that most closely links with the Tenant Participation Strategy is “A Wales of cohesive communities - attractive, viable, safe and well connected communities”.
- 3.2 Tenant Involvement also links with the current Local Housing Strategy Aim 6:
“providing good quality, well managed homes in communities where people want to live and offer people housing choices which meet their needs and aspirations”
- 3.3 The National Housing Strategy 2010 ‘Improving Lives and Communities’ emphasises the need to:
“Give tenants a clear voice in decisions that affect them” and that “services should reflect the needs of those who use them, not the needs of the organisations who deliver them”.
- 3.4 Corporately, the Tenant Participation Strategy will also link to the Council’s Public Engagement Strategy, the Council’s Strategic Equality Objectives 3 & 4, and also to the themes in “Caerphilly Delivers”, the Local Service Board single integrated plan.

3.5 Also, Key Aim 1 of the Caerphilly Homes Communications Strategy 2015 - 2018 is “to raise the awareness of stakeholders on the range of services we provide, how to access our services, our performance in providing these services and how they can influence our services”.

4. THE REPORT

4.1 This Tenant Participation Strategy has been designed to support the delivery of the Local Housing Strategy by ensuring that robust and valid evidence is generated through tenant participation to support the delivery of good and improving housing services. To achieve this, the Tenant & Community Involvement Team undertook a programme of engagement with staff and tenants.

4.2 The existing Tenant Participation Strategy (2013-16) had served its purpose and required review and updating. To support the development of the new Strategy a number of staff participated in a Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) Project “Working together to challenge tenant involvement”. This project involved 5 workshop sessions over 5 months with other landlords on issues covering challenges to tenant involvement, cultural change and co-creation. Consultancy time with a CIH associate was also part of the project.

4.3 Joint staff and tenant workshop sessions (made up of 7 tenants and 7 staff) were undertaken in the Autumn 2015 to **Review the Purpose of tenant participation, provide an assessment on how we have done to date and understand the factors that affect us and what we do**. The workshops were held over 2 days and were independently facilitated by the CIH associate. Themes that emerged from the workshop were:

- Understand the needs of current and future tenants
- Need to involve a range of tenants/lack of diversity
- Feedback and evidence of service improvement/progress
- Two way communication/feedback
- Value for money
- Measure results

4.4 To understand the outputs of the joint staff and tenant workshop sessions, the Tenant & Community Involvement Team held its own workshop day also facilitated by the CIH associate. The information taken from these workshops as well as a review of lessons learnt from the delivery of the Tenant Participation Strategy (2013-16) has been used to inform the development of our 2016-19 Tenant Participation Strategy. We wanted to create a short, focused Strategy that would provide the vision and key objectives that would drive our tenant participation activities for the next 3 years and beyond.

4.5 The Strategy Purpose is “To have tenant driven and continually improving services”. To support this purpose, 4 objectives underpin the Strategy. These are:

- Objective 1 - we will understand the needs of our current and future tenants
- Objective 2 - we will turn the feedback into information that will support improving services
- Objective 3 - we will deliver effective two-way communication between Caerphilly Homes and our tenants
- Objective 4 - we will review the effectiveness of the tenant participation service and update our approach based on evidence

4.6 The Strategy will be supported by an annual operational Action plan which will align with the Purpose and 4 Objectives. The activities/tasks within the Action plan will be based on SMART principles (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and with Timescales) ensuring that the 4 objectives can be met. It is important to continually review our progress against our strategic objectives to ensure that it continues to drive service improvement. See Appendix 1 for copy of Strategy.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The National Housing Strategy 2010 demonstrates the need to ensure that all tenants are allowed a voice and have their individual needs taken into account, regardless of their individual circumstances and backgrounds.
- 5.2 The overriding principle of the 2016-19 Strategy is to generate representative evidence from the total population. To ensure this, the delivery of the Strategy must ensure equal access for all tenants under Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011, the Welsh Language Standards (No. 1) Regulations 2015 and the Council's own Strategic Equality Plan 2016-2020.
- 5.3 The specific activities within the Action plan will have to be supported by individual impact assessments.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Any activities associated with the Strategy will be accommodated within the existing Tenant Participation budget.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no direct personnel implications. The Strategy will be supported through the Tenant & Community Involvement Team (and if required other existing staff resources).

8. CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 The views of consultees listed have been incorporated within the report.
- 8.2 The Tenant & Staff workshop group and Tenant Information Exchange (TIE) have both received a presentation on the Purpose & four Objectives of the Strategy. Discussions were held at both consultation events and comments/suggestions put forward. Both groups fully supported the Strategy. Some minor alterations have been made to the wording of the Strategy based on the feedback.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 Members of the CHTG are asked to provide comments in relation to the proposed strategy prior to submission to Cabinet.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 To keep members of the CHTG updated and informed on tenant participation progress.

Author: Elizabeth Bayliss - Tenant Participation Officer
Consultees: Councillor David Poole - Cabinet Member for Housing
Christina Harry - Corporate Director Communities and Education
Nicole Scammell - Director of Corporate Finance
Shaun Couzens - Chief Housing Officer
Phil Davy - Head of Programmes (WHQS)
Fiona Wilkins - Public Sector Housing Manager
Mandy Betts - Tenant & Community Involvement Manager
Gail Taylor - Tenant Participation Officer

Kelsey Watkins - Communications & Tenant Engagement Officer
David A Thomas - Senior Policy Officer (Equalities & Welsh Language)
Mark Jennings - Housing Strategy Officer

Appendix 1: Tenant Participation Strategy (2013 -16)

Background Papers: Feedback session notes with joint staff & tenant workshop group and TIE

Caerphilly Homes Tenant Participation Strategy 2016-2019

Introduction

To enable us to achieve our tenant participation strategic purpose...

“to have tenant driven and continually improving services”,

we must understand the world in which we exist. Our operating environment poses many challenges and opportunities and by identifying and understanding both will enable us to plan effectively to mitigate the risks and seize the opportunities.

Understanding our World

- We know that services designed and tailored to meet the needs of tenants will be:
 - Higher performing
 - More likely to improve
 - Be more efficient
- The housing market is dynamic and changing rapidly, the needs and expectations of our current and future tenants will continue to change and our engagement with our tenants (customers) must remain fit for purpose.
- Resource levels, including the level of rental income in the future is uncertain - tailoring services through tenant engagement is a necessity to deliver required efficiency savings (tenant participation can help us save money and deliver more)
- Changing demographics - the age profile/household composition projections show that the population is getting older and that their service requirement will change (Welsh LA population projections).
- Communication and engagement preferences - the way in which people want to communicate and engage will continue to change. This presents challenges and opportunities in relation to electronic channels of communication



Our Strategic Objectives

Our strategic objectives for 2016 - 19 are designed to enable us to achieve our strategic purpose. The development of these objectives has been informed by our understanding of the challenges and opportunity we face.

Objective 1:

We will understand the needs of our current and future tenants

- we will ensure that we engage with tenants and future tenants to ensure representative views
- we will utilise a variety of methods to understand the needs
- we will identify the most effective engagement methods

Objective 2:

We will turn the feedback into information that will support improving services

- we will provide Caerphilly Homes (the business) with information to improve the way we work to meet tenants needs
- we will provide evidence to enable us to do more of what tenants want and less of what is not needed

Objective 3:

We will deliver effective two way communication between Caerphilly Homes and our tenants

- we will keep our tenants informed – “You said...we did” (feedback on what we have done with the information we collected)
- we will use the right communication techniques to maximise the engagement of our tenants
- we will explore and implement opportunities to maximise engagement through electronic channels with our tenants



Objective 4:

We will review the effectiveness of the tenant participation service and update our approach based on evidence

- we will measure the effectiveness of tenant participation in meeting the purpose
- we will monitor and understand value for money of our tenant participation activities

Monitoring and Review

It is important to continually review our progress against the strategic objectives to ensure the Strategy achieves its purpose.

We will use the following performance measures to measure the organisation's effectiveness in delivering our Tenant Participation Strategy:

1. Number of tenants meaningfully engaged (engaged in service improvement consultation)
2. Satisfaction with "listens to my views and acts on them"
3. Representative sample: average age of engaged tenants
4. Evidence that services improve

Operational Action Plan

The Strategy will be supported by an annual operational Action Plan to deliver the strategic objectives over the 3 years. The Action Plan will be based on SMART principles (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and with Timescales), to ensure the objectives are met.

Equalities and Welsh Language

The overriding principle of the Strategy is to generate representative evidence. To ensure this, the delivery of the Strategy must ensure equal access for all tenants and therefore will not prejudice those rights under current Equalities and Welsh Language legislation in Wales and the Council's own Strategic Equality Plan 2016-2020. The specific activities will be supported by individual impact assessments.



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CABINET – 1ST JUNE 2016

SUBJECT: HOUSING REPAIRS – REVIEW OF RECHARGE DISCOUNT

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR - COMMUNITIES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to review the impact on income and recovery levels of the recent trial to offer tenants a 25% discount for prompt repayment of invoices for rechargeable repairs and end of tenancy works. This trial was introduced following the submission of a report to Cabinet on 18th March 2015. Members' approval is sought to withdraw the offer of a discount to tenants for prompt repayment.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The aim of the Rechargeable Repairs Policy is to contribute to the efficient and effective maintenance of the Council's housing stock. At the request of the repairs and Improvements Group a 25% discount for tenants for the payment of invoices within 35 days of receipt was introduced for a trial period in an attempt to incentivise tenants to pay their recharges within a reasonable timescale and to encourage more tenants to pay. If successful this would increase income to the Housing Revenue Account, despite the discount resulting in an under recovery of costs incurred in carrying out the repair works. The trial has run for approximately ten months.
- 2.2 Whilst there has been an improving trend in collections for rechargeable repairs and end of tenancy works over the previous four years, the trial of offering a 25% discount for prompt repayment has not, in itself, resulted in a significant increase in the number or size of payments received. Should the trial be extended a capital outlay would be required for IT improvements to ensure the process can be administered effectively and the discount would constitute a subsidy to tenants from the HRA.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 The Rechargeable Repairs Policy assists the Council in meeting the aims and priorities detailed in the following strategies:
- 3.2 **National Housing Strategy:** The Welsh Assembly Government's National Housing Strategy 'Better Homes for People in Wales' (2001) has key themes of quality and choice. The WAG vision for housing "*wants everyone in Wales to have the opportunity to live in good quality, affordable housing*".
- 3.3 **The Single Integrated Plan 2013-2017:** has a priority to: "Improve standards of housing and communities giving appropriate access to services across the county borough".

- 3.4 **Local Housing Strategy:** Property Theme: *“Providing the opportunity for everyone to live in affordable, sustainable, good quality housing, regardless of tenure.”*
And links specifically to Strategic Aim 6: Housing Management, *“To provide good quality, well-managed homes in communities where people want to live, and offer people housing choices which meet their needs and aspirations.”*

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 The Council as Landlord has an obligation to keep its housing stock in a good state of repair. When repairs are reported they are completed at no cost to the tenant, providing the repair is a Landlord responsibility and is required as a result of fair wear and tear. This usually means where the fixture or fitting has worn out or has come to the end of its natural life. Tenants have a responsibility to act responsibly and maintain their homes to a satisfactory standard and when a repair has been identified as not being caused through fair wear and tear, the Council may recharge the cost of the repair to the tenant.
- 4.2 The Rechargeable Repairs Policy is referenced in Section 21 of the Tenancy Agreement which states:
21. You will pay the Council on demand any costs it incurs:
- 21.1 for repairs to the property or to common parts of flats as a result of willful damage, neglect or negligence by you or any person residing in or visiting the property; or
- 21.2 for the removal of any unauthorised alterations or improvements to the property and any necessary reinstatement work or where any alterations, improvements or repairs have been carried out by you or on your behalf in an unworkmanlike manner; or
- 21.3 as a result of you having failed to carry out within a reasonable time repairs to the property which are your responsibility
- 4.3 It is accepted that the vast majority of Council tenants have not been or are unlikely to be recharged for undertaking repairs, however, the Rechargeable Repairs Policy is in place to deal with the situations where tenants fail to act responsibly and maintain their homes to a satisfactory standard.
- 4.4 When the Rechargeable Repairs Policy was introduced in 2015 it was agreed that, for a trial period, a discount of 25% would be offered to tenants if payment was made within 35 days from the date of the invoice. It was further agreed that the discount be subject to a review within 6 to 12 months in order to establish its success in respect of improving the amount of income received for the HRA. The discount was introduced in May 2015.
- 4.5 The purpose of applying a discount was to reduce the costs that are applied to our tenants for rechargeable repairs and to also incentivise tenants to pay charges within an acceptable timescale. Any discount applied however, results in an under recovery of the costs involved in undertaking the works and it was not possible to predict whether a discount would result in more tenants paying their recharges, or in tenants paying larger recharges than they may have done historically, without the Council having to utilise the sundry debtor process. If those tenants who had previously paid promptly for repairs continued to do so, this would result in reduced income to the Housing Revenue Account, as those payers would receive a 25% discount on payments that would have previously been received in full.
- 4.6 The table below provides information on the number and gross value of invoices issued for rechargeable repairs and end of tenancy works in the most recent four financial years and compares this data to the value of collections over the same period. It must be recognised, however, that a proportion of the payments collected in any one year will relate to invoices issued in previous years as, utilising existing systems, it is not possible to establish how much

of the amount invoiced is actually paid within the financial year in which it was issued.

YEAR	No. of Invoices	Value of Invoices	Collections	Collections as % of Invoices Raised in the Financial Year
2012 / 2013	1221	£439,676	£60,493	13.76%
2013 / 2014	1237	£263,184	£77,921	29.61%
2014 / 2015	1893	£412,512	£116,216	28.17%
2015 / 2016	1533	£320,044	£106,688	33.33%

- 4.7 As mentioned previously, it is not possible to establish, for payments received in any one year, in which year the individual invoices were raised, and it is recognised that a significant proportion of the income received in any one year relates to invoices raised in previous years. Nevertheless it is pleasing to note an improving trend in collection rates for rechargeable repairs and end of tenancy works. This is due, in no small part, to the continued efforts of officers within both Housing and Finance and to the work of debt collection agencies appointed by the Authority to assist in the recovery of outstanding debts. In 15/16 these agencies collected £21,348 of Housing recharges, approximately 20% of the total recovered. There have also been procedural changes that are likely to have contributed to the increase.
- 4.8 The introduction of the 25% discount for prompt payment has not had a significant impact on the payment levels received for rechargeable repairs and end of tenancy works. In 15/16, across the County Borough 104 payments were received from tenants who benefitted from the 25% discount. These payments totalled £5,232.94 after application of the discount, £6,977.25 before application, demonstrating a saving to tenants, and consequential loss to the HRA, of £1,733.31. These payments relate to only 2.18% of the total value of invoices raised in 15/16 and 4.90% of payments received.
- 4.9 The average repayment after application of the discount was £50.32 which demonstrates that the discount has not incentivised tenants to pay larger invoices, as had been hoped. Only seven payments received were in excess of £100. These smaller payments are historically recognised to be those that are most likely to be paid by tenants. A reasonable assumption would, therefore, be that a significant proportion of those who paid their invoices promptly, thereby benefitting from the discounts, would have paid those invoices even without the discount being offered. Due to the small numbers taking up the offer, the introduction of the discount is, therefore, not considered to have resulted in an overall increase in income to the HRA.
- 4.10 There have been extensive difficulties encountered in administering and reporting on the 25% discount trial using existing IT systems. If the trial were to be extended the Sundry Debtor Section has confirmed that their IT software would be required to be upgraded. Having consulted with their existing IT software supplier an appropriate enhancement of the existing system, to identify and automatically process any discount adjustments where the relevant criteria have been met, would cost approximately £8,000. There would also be consequential costs for the IT and Sundry Debtor Sections of implementing and maintaining the enhancements.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no equalities implications associated with this report.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Continuing to offer a discount for tenants who settle their invoice promptly is, in effect, a cost to the Service as any discount applied results in an under recovery of the costs incurred. If the trial continues and only the same level of recharges are repaid as have been paid historically, this would result in a reduced income to the Housing Revenue Account. Evidence obtained from the trial indicates that continuing to offer such a discount would not have a positive impact on the levels of bad debts and arrears as the introduction of a discount has not substantially increased the level of income received for the Housing Revenue Account.
- 6.2 Should the trial be extended new IT software will be required to be purchased at a cost of approximately £8,000, in order to administer the service effectively. There would also be as yet undetermined consequential costs for the IT and Sundry Debtor Sections of implementing and maintaining the enhancements.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no direct personnel implications. Housing staff will continue to take direct action in the recovery process which includes home visits, providing money advice and signposting to appropriate support agencies.

8. CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 There are no consultation responses that have not been reflected in this report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 That a trial to offer tenants a 25% discount for payments made within 35 days of receipt of an invoice for both rechargeable repairs and end of tenancy repairs be withdrawn.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 The 25% discount results in an under recovery of costs to the Service and has not resulted in an increase in income to the HRA. It is considered that the continuation of the trial will not provide value for money for the HRA as it will incur increased IT costs, reduce the level of income received and will not have a positive impact on the levels of bad debts.

Author: Fiona Wilkins – Public Sector Housing Manager
Consultees: Councillor David Poole - Cabinet Member for Housing
Christina Harray - Corporate Director Communities and Education
Nicole Scammell - Director of Corporate Finance
Shaun Couzens - Chief Housing Officer
Phil Davy - Head of Programmes (WHQS)
Gail Williams – Interim Head of Legal Services/Monitoring Officer
Debbie Bishop - Area Housing Manager
Julie Reynolds - Area Housing Manager
Angela Hiscox - Neighbourhood Housing Manager
Karen James - Neighbourhood Housing Manager
Paul Smythe - Housing Repair Operations Manager
Lesley Allen – Principal Accountant
Craig Verrier – Senior Income Officer
David A Thomas - Senior Policy Officer (Equalities & Welsh Language)

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CABINET – 1ST JUNE 2016

SUBJECT: VOLUNTARY SECTOR GRANTS CAPITAL ALLOCATION 2016/17

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR, SOCIAL SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek Cabinet approval for the 2016/17 capital budget allocation to the Voluntary Sector Capital Grants Fund as required in section 4.8.2 and table 10 of the Budget Proposals 2016/17 and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2016/2021 report which was considered by Full Council on the 24th February 2016.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Budget Proposals 2016/17 and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2016/2021 report (subsequently referred to as the Budget Report) details the capital budget allocation to each service area for 2016/17.
- 2.2 It also gives an indicative allocation for 2017/18 and 2018/19. Section 4.8.2 of the Budget Report outlines the requirement for further review and or business cases to be presented to Cabinet in order to justify the capital allocation to five service areas within the Regeneration and Planning Division. Since the Budget Report of 24th February was approved, responsibility for the Voluntary Sector Capital Grants budget has moved from Regeneration and Planning to Public Protection, with effect from 1st April 2016. The remainder of this report focuses on this budget only.
- 2.3 Following consultation with Interim Head of Finance, this report only seeks approval of capital funding for 2016/17. Subsequent years' indicative capital budget allocations are to be considered on an annual basis

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 The Voluntary Sector Capital Grants scheme supports the Single Integrated Plan, Caerphilly Delivers, and in particular contributes to the Prosperous, Healthier, and Greener Caerphilly themes. The scheme also supports the Council's Anti Poverty Strategy.
- 3.2 It is a requirement of the Voluntary Sector Capital Grants scheme that any projects shall have a positive impact upon the social, economic, environmental or cultural well-being of the area or community concerned. In particular the scheme contributes to the following Well-being Goals within the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015:
- A resilient Wales
 - A prosperous Wales
 - A healthier Wales
 - A more equal Wales

- A Wales of cohesive communities
- A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language

The Voluntary Sector Capital Grants scheme is also consistent with five ways of working set out in the sustainable development principle, as defined in the Act. The scheme is integrated in that it contributes to a number of the Well-being goals and supports the objectives of other stakeholders within the community. Implementation of the scheme exemplifies collaboration across organisational boundaries; working together for the good of our communities in pursuit of shared objectives. Grant awards generally take a long term view looking to protect and improve the local environment and infrastructure for future use. Applications are welcomed from local grassroots community or voluntary organisations based in Caerphilly county borough reflecting a broad opportunity for involvement. There is an emphasis on prevention to secure a sustainable future for local communities and projects are welcomed that will enhance employment prospects and skills of local people, particularly the young and those at a disadvantage, and promote equality of opportunity.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 The capital programme 2016/17 – 2018/19 is set out in Appendix 6 of the Budget Report which was approved by Council on February 24th 2016. However, the report identified that the capital allocation for five projects within the Regeneration and Planning Division are provisional and require further review and/or business cases to go before Cabinet in order to release funds to the service area.
- 4.2 Responsibility for the Voluntary Sector Capital Grants budget moved from Regeneration and Planning to Public Protection on 1st April 2016. Section 4.8.2 of the Budget Report indicates that £170,000 has been provisionally included for the Voluntary Sector Capital Grants scheme in the proposed Capital Programme for 2016/17. Subsequent years' indicative capital budget allocations are to be considered on an annual basis.
- 4.3 The Voluntary Sector Capital Grants budget is currently used to operate a grant scheme for the community/voluntary sector across the whole of Caerphilly County Borough, known as the Community Regeneration Fund. The purpose of the grant scheme is to foster and enhance viable and sustainable communities and to enable community/voluntary sector organisations to bid for funding, to enable the sector to take forward initiatives they have developed for the benefit of the local community or service users. The grant scheme recognises the importance of the community/voluntary sector and the value the Council places on their ability to identify and take forward projects that meet the needs of their local communities.
- 4.4 The Voluntary Sector Capital Grants scheme is managed as a competitive application process, with a minimum of three application rounds per annum, subject to the availability of resources. A Panel, chaired by the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning and Sustainable Development, with representation from the community and voluntary sector and the Corporate Policy Unit, considers all the applications. Recommendations from the Panel in terms of funding to be awarded were previously approved by the Head of Regeneration & Planning using delegated powers – this responsibility has transferred to the Head of Public Protection from 1st April 2016. Capital grants of up to £25,000 per project are available, but most of the awards are for smaller amounts. Organisations are restricted to one award per individual project.
- 4.5 This is the only source of larger scale capital funding available to the voluntary sector from the local authority, and without this funding many of our local community based services would fall into disrepair, or new services and venues would not be offered to local residents. In addition, this funding will be of increased importance to the sector in the future, due to the Council's policy of asset transferring Council owned buildings into community ownership by way of lease or permanent transfer where an appropriate and sustainable business case can be made. This grant scheme will help to ensure that these buildings are fit for purpose and

meet the needs of the local communities concerned. A full description/business case is appended to this report.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 An EqIA screening has been completed in accordance with the Council's Strategic Equality Plan and supplementary guidance and no potential for unlawful discrimination and/or low level or minor negative impact have been identified, therefore a full EqIA has not been carried out.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 As noted in the Budget Report, Cabinet must approve the provisional allocation in order for it to be released to the Public Protection Division.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no direct personnel implications arising from this report.

8. CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 The report has been sent to the consultees listed below and all consultation responses have been reflected in this report

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 That Cabinet approve the 2016/17 capital allocation of £170,000 to the Voluntary Sector Capital Grants scheme.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 To ensure approval of the 2016/17 capital allocation to the Voluntary Sector Capital Grants scheme in accordance with the Budget Report 2016/17.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 Local Government Act 2000

Author: Vicki Doyle, Corporate Policy Officer
Consultees: Cllr Ken James, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning & Sustainable Development
Dave Street, Corporate Director, Social Services
Nicole Scammell, Acting Director of Corporate Services
Christina Harray, Corporate Director Communities
Gail Williams, Interim Head of Legal & Democratic Services
Stephen Harris, Interim Head of Corporate Finance
Nadeem Akhtar, Group Accountant, Corporate Services
David A. Thomas, Senior Policy Officer (Equalities and Welsh Language)
Kathryn Peters, Corporate Policy Manager
Robert Hartshorn, Head of Public Protection

Appendix 1 – Voluntary Sector Capital Grants Business Case

Budget Title: Voluntary Sector Capital Grants

Financial Bid 2016/17: £170,000

Business Case

The Voluntary Sector Capital budget is currently used to operate a grant scheme for the community/voluntary sector across the whole of Caerphilly county borough, known as the Community Regeneration Fund. Until August 2015 the budget was also used to match fund the Convergence funded South East Wales Community Economic Development Programme (SEWCED), but this project has now ended.

The Community Regeneration Fund has both capital and revenue streams of funding available. The purpose of the grant scheme is to foster and enhance viable and sustainable communities within the county borough, and to enable community/voluntary sector organisations to bid for funding to enable the sector to take forward initiatives they have developed for the benefit of the local community or service users. The grant scheme recognises the importance of the community/voluntary sector within the county borough and the value the Council places on their ability to identify and take forward projects that meet the needs of their local communities.

Organisations seeking support will be required to show that:

- the project will have an social, economic, environmental or cultural impact on the area or community concerned;
- the project demonstrates clearly that it is responding to needs identified by a community within Caerphilly county borough, whether that be a geographic community or a community of interest;
- the project is completely new in nature or offers significant extension or expansion to that which the organisation is already doing in the community; and
- the project will be managed by a voluntary or community organisation based within Caerphilly county borough.

Projects must also meet one or more of the following aims:

- they will enhance employment prospects and skills of local people, particularly the young and those at a disadvantage, and promote equality of opportunity.
- they will protect and improve the local environment and infrastructure, and bring land and buildings into effective use.
- they will enhance the quality of life of people through social, cultural and recreational opportunities.
- they will promote and encourage local people to secure a sustainable future for local communities and/or encourage regeneration.

Applicants to the Community Regeneration Fund (CRF) grant scheme are required to complete a formal application form which describes their project and how it meets the criteria for the grant scheme and the aims/objectives of the scheme. Eligibility criteria are shown overleaf.

All applicants must:

- be a local grassroots community or voluntary organisation based in Caerphilly county borough - applications are not be accepted from nationally based organisations unless they can demonstrate delivery within the county borough
- have a signed and adopted constitution or Memorandum & Articles of Association
- have a bank account in the name of the organisation
- have aims and objectives in keeping with those of the grant scheme
- have a clear management structure
- have clear financial controls in place
- have an agreed and adopted equal opportunities policy

It should also be noted that all applications are assessed using the following criteria:

- the project has social, economic, environmental or cultural benefits for the area or community concerned
- the project meets one or more aims of the grant scheme
- the project contributes to the sustainable regeneration of the area
- there is a financial contribution to the project from the applicant and/or other sources
- the project represents good value for money
- the project is capable of achieving spend during the life of the project
- evidence is provided that ongoing revenue costs and the sustainability of the project have been given due consideration
- the applicant organisation has a signed and adopted Constitution or Memorandum & Articles of Association
- the applicant organisation has an up-to-date set of audited or formally accepted accounts available if established for over one year
- plans/drawings are available where the project involves the construction, adaptation or refurbishment of a building
- planning permission, building regulations and all other necessary consents have been secured or applied for in relation to any building works (where appropriate)
- the applicant has provided evidence of ownership of the land/building that the project relates to, or that they have secured or are applying for a lease or licence for the land/building, with a minimum of 10 years to run
- it is clear how the project will encourage equal opportunities
- evidence is provided of support from appropriate organisations and/or individuals affected by the project

The grant scheme is managed as a competitive application process, with a minimum of three application rounds per annum. A Panel considers all the applications received, which is chaired by the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning & Sustainable Development, with representation from the community and voluntary sector and the Corporate Policy Unit. All applications submitted are scored independently by the Grants Panel in advance of Panel meetings. At these meetings, each application is discussed in detail with reference to the agreed criteria outlined above before the Panel makes a collective recommendation on projects to be supported and amounts of funding to be awarded. Recommendations from the Panel in terms of funding to be awarded are approved by the Head of Public Protection under their delegated powers.

Capital grants of up to £25,000 per project are available, but most of the awards are for smaller amounts. Organisations are restricted to one award per individual project, but can apply for funding towards more than one project, or different phases of larger capital projects.

One thing of particular note with this grant scheme is that awards are capped at a maximum of 80% of total costs, with match funding being drawn in from a variety of sources including the organisations' own funds, and other grant funding programmes such as the Welsh Church Fund, Big Lottery and Community Facilities Programme, to name but a few. A summary of grants awarded and match funding drawn in by organisations for the past three financial years is shown in the table overleaf.

Year	Total grant awarded	Match funding
2013/14	£99,151.20	£32,542.70
2014/15	£156,502.63	£40,012.71
2015/16	£211,568.83	£110,240.42

In 2013/14 and 2014/15 the total of grants awarded was less than the £170k budget because match funding was being provided for the SEWCED project at that point. In each of those years the £170k total budget was fully allocated. As can be seen from the table, for 2015/16 there was an over-allocation of £42k, which was funded via an underspend on the revenue element of the budget (see RCCO previously approved for up to £50k). This evidences the continuing demand within the community/voluntary sector for this grant scheme.

Grant payments are made once work has been completed (e.g. where the project involves improvements to land/buildings) or where goods have been purchased, and these are seen or inspected during the claim process. Invoices or receipts must be provided to evidence work undertaken or where items have been purchased. At the end of each project, applicant organisations are asked to complete an end of project monitoring form which compares actual achievements against targets in their original application, and asked to provide reasons for any significant deviations.

Also worth noting is that the Community Regeneration Fund is often used to 'pump prime' applications to organisations such as the Lottery and the Welsh Government, and in 2015/16 three organisations were successful in securing very large grants from the WG Community Facilities Programme on the back of a smaller CRF grant:

Argoed Baptist Church £267k
 Newbridge Tabernacle Baptist Church £498k
 St Dingat's Church, New Tredegar £400k

The CRF is the only source of larger scale capital funding available to the voluntary sector from the local authority, and without this funding many of our local community based services would fall into disrepair, or new services and venues would not be offered to local residents.

Larger scale capital projects the grants programme has contributed to in recent years include:

- Senghenydd Community Centre
- Blackwood Little Theatre
- St Dingat's Church, New Tredegar
- Tabernacle Baptist Church, Newbridge
- Argoed Baptist Church
- Caerphilly Miners Community Centre for the Community
- St Martin's Church, Caerphilly
- The United Reformed Church, Caerphilly
- Taraggan Educational Gardens, Bargoed
- New Life Christian Church, Abercarn
- Penyrheol Community Centre

As outlined above, the budget for 2015/16 was over-committed by circa £50k, which evidences the ongoing demand for the grant scheme. The criteria and application documentation is in the process of being reviewed, to ensure it remains fit for purpose and to better align with the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.

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