



## CAERPHILLY HOMES TASK GROUP – 17TH SEPTEMBER 2015

**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 Caerphilly Homes 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 the 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 TARRAGAN Educational Gardens.

### **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 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 The Council’s Local Housing Strategy “People, Property, and Places” has the following aim:  
“To provide good quality, well managed houses in communities where people want to live, and offer people housing choices which meet their needs and aspirations.”

### **4. THE REPORT**

- 4.1 The CHTG is asked to consider an application to the Community Improvement Fund by TARAGGAN Educational Gardens.
- 4.2 The TARAGGAN project aims to encourage people living in Greater Bargoed to get involved in conservation and gardening by using the green space site that they currently have for outdoor recreation. TARAGGAN looks to introduce people who are inactive to live a healthier lifestyle by using the outdoor living environment for community allotment gardening. The project has enabled people to become more active, healthy & happy whilst continuing to build a strong intergenerational community spirit in the area and enable people to take pride in a local landmark.
- 4.3 TARAGGAN Educational Gardens was conceived as a project in 2007 and produced its first crop for picking in June 2010. Since then, the community allotment site has gone from strength to strength and has captured the minds of many residents in the local community as well as the support of partner agencies. The Committee has a waiting list of individuals and groups that have requested a plot.
- 4.4 The site is open roughly six days per week and the Committee are welcoming of any community member who wishes to come along and get involved, be it through sowing seeds, picking fruit or helping with the on-going maintenance of what is a fairly large site. TARAGGAN relies on the support of local community members as, without them, there would be no project. The Committee also sells produce to local residents i.e. flowers, plants, fruit/veg. etc.
- 4.5 The group is run by a dedicated committee of 7 volunteers. The committee estimates that approximately 200 volunteers pass through the gates in the summer months.

- 4.6 Over recent months, and with the support of Communities First, TARAGGAN's Committee have been granted a significant extension on land directly adjacent to their site, which formed the basis of an application to the Community Regeneration Fund. This brings into use an area of land that would otherwise have likely remained unused. TARAGGAN have secured this extension as part of their current lease and have completed the necessary procedures with the Council, which included a Public Open Spaces Advert and surveyors' fees. They have also been supported with a grant from the Technical Assistance Fund to help with the associated legal costs.
- 4.7 TARAGGAN is a popular allotment gardening facility and therefore has out-grown the size of its existing site. Expanding to its side will allow for further bedding plots to be created; this will include flat and raised beds to allow equal opportunities for all members of the local community. Towards the rear of the new parcel of land, drainage is poor, however, TARAGGAN aims to use this to its advantage and hopes to create a boggy marsh area which will support and enhance local wildlife that relishes this type of habitat.
- 4.8 TARAGGAN's Committee have worked hard to develop and maintain relationships with a number of key partner agencies delivering services in the locality, including Groundwork, Gofal and Communities First as well as statutory service providers such as the Department of Work and Pensions through work experience and placements. Local primary schools have also taken an active interest in the community gardening aspect and have plots of their own.
- 4.9 Letters of support have been received from Users, Gilfach Tenants and Residents Association, charitable groups, GAVO, Communities First, local Councillors and Assembly Members. Furthermore, evidence of a community consultation has been provided suggesting that the community are supportive of the current facility and the proposed expansion.
- 4.10 TARRAGON are seeking funding from the Community Improvement Fund to help part finance the costs associated with the expansion and redevelopment of the site.
- 4.11 The total cost of the project is £20,770.56. TARRAGON have applied to the Community Improvement Fund for a contribution of £3854.11.
- 4.12 The remaining £16,916.45 has been secured from other sources including the Community Regeneration Fund, Bargoed Town Council and Communities First.
- 4.13 TARRAGON Educational Gardens have provided two quotes for the work overall and provided a copy of their constitution.
- 4.14 The project is coterminous with the aims, objectives and award criteria of the Community Improvement Fund.

## **5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

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

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The Community Improvement Fund provides a capital grant to community groups of up to £5,000 to support community projects that meet one or more of the Communities First priorities and add value to the WHQS programme through improving the appearance of communities, amenities within communities and / or increasing participation by communities throughout the county borough.

6.2 An annual budget of £50,000 per annum is available.

6.3 TARRAGON Educational Gardens are seeking a contribution of £3854.11 from the Community Improvement Fund.

## **7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 There are no personnel implications arising from the report.

## **8. CONSULTATIONS**

8.1 Positive support has been received from one of the local Ward Councillors.

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

9.1 CTHG support the application by TARRAGON Educational Gardens on the basis that the expansion and redevelopment which will have a positive impact on the health and well being of tenants living within the adjacent housing area and subject to the following condition:

- Copies of relevant permissions including planning and change of use are submitted before any claims are made.

## **10. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

## **11. STATUTORY POWER**

11.1 Housing Acts and Local Government Acts.

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