



## CABINET – 30TH SEPTEMBER 2015

**SUBJECT: RURAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (RDP) FUNDING 2014-2020**

**REPORT BY: CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

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### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update Cabinet on the Rural Development Programme (RDP) and obtain Cabinet's endorsement for the commencement of the RDP within Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent County Boroughs.

### 2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Following on from the Cabinet report dated the 12<sup>th</sup> November 2014, the following milestones have been met:

- Since submission of the draft LDS in September 2014 amendments have been made following requests for further information and confirmation has been received from Welsh Government that it has met the required quality threshold.
- The Welsh Government has approved the Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent Local Action Group (LAG) status including Caerphilly County Borough Council as the 'Administrative Body'.
- The European Commission has formally approved the Welsh Government's Wales RDP Programme.
- Formal Funding Approval Letters have been received from the Welsh Government confirming that the LEADER budget allocation for the RDP in Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent County Boroughs is £2,642,994.

- 2.2 As officers have now received the formal Funding Approval letters from the Welsh Government, Cabinet is being asked to endorse the commencement of the RDP Programme within Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent County Boroughs.

Meaning of acronyms used in this report:

- LAG – Local Action Group – The Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent Local Action Group contains representatives from the public, private and voluntary/community sectors, set up to oversee the delivery of the RDP in Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent County Boroughs. It is also responsible for making decisions on the allocation of funding for procured projects funded through the RDP's Implementation budget.
- LDS – Local Development Strategy – The over-arching strategy document guiding the RDP in Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent County Boroughs.
- LEADER - *Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale* – The approach under Axis 4 of the RDP meaning 'Links between the rural economy and development actions'.
- RDP – Rural Development Programme – An investment programme funded through the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development which aims to improve resilience and promote transformational change in agriculture, forestry and rural communities.

### **3. LINKS TO STRATEGY**

- 3.1 The RDP LEADER programme is a regeneration initiative for rural areas delivered through community engagement and development. It has a broad set of themes including natural and cultural resources, micro enterprise support, basic services for communities and community energy. As such it contributes to a range of local economic, regeneration and social inclusion strategies and a number of priorities within the Single Integrated Plan.

### **4. THE REPORT**

- 4.1 The Welsh Government has confirmed the LEADER budget allocation for the RDP in Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent County Boroughs as £2,642,994. Amendments were made to the LDS following feedback from the Welsh Government. These amendments included revisions to the Local Action Group Terms of Reference, the production of Statement of Controls and clarifications on match funding. As a result of these amendments the Welsh Government has confirmed that the LDS has reached the required quality threshold. Additionally, the Welsh Government has approved the Local Action Group status and Caerphilly County Borough Council as the 'Administrative Body'. The RDP will run for 6 years to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2021.
- 4.2 The RDP will be overseen by the Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent Local Action Group (LAG), which will comprise local stakeholders from Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent County Boroughs, Welsh Government and other organisations. The LAG will oversee the delivery of the Local Development Strategy (LDS) and will focus on working with rural people, communities and businesses to develop projects and ideas and add value through networks and local supply chains within eligible Wards. The LAG will be responsible for making decisions on the allocation of funding for projects funded through the RDP's Implementation budget.
- 4.3 The LAG will be bound by its own Terms of Reference (attached for reference). The LAG is made up of 18 members containing representatives of the private, public and voluntary/community sectors. The CCBC Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning and Countryside has a standing membership on the LAG, as will a Member from Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council. In order for the LAG's decisions and meetings to be quorate, a minimum of 8 members or 33% of the voting membership (whichever is the greater), need to be in attendance.
- 4.4 Caerphilly County Borough Council, in its capacity as the 'Administrative Body', has the power to veto LAG decisions if the LAG's decisions are deemed by the Administrative Body to be non-compliant, ineligible or in breach of EU or other Regulations or Legislation. This protects both the LAG and Caerphilly County Borough Council by ensuring that the decisions made by the LAG are compliant and lawful.
- 4.5 Following consultation, the terms of reference will be amended in accordance with the requirements of the Council's Head of Legal Services to strengthen the governance arrangements.
- 4.6 Caerphilly County Borough Council will act as the 'Administrative Body' for the RDP in Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent. The lead programme management will be undertaken by CCBC Regeneration and Planning and the financial management and compliance undertaken by CCBC Corporate Finance. Officers have been working with colleagues in Blaenau Gwent County Borough and a Service Level Agreement is currently being drafted which will formalise the working arrangement with Blaenau Gwent CBC.

### **5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Equalities issues are addressed through the RDP LEADER programme. Equal Opportunities, Tackling Poverty and Exclusion, and the Welsh Language are all cross cutting themes within the Local Development Strategy and form part of the criteria against which the submission will

be assessed. Current RDP project work also supports the Council in achieving a number of the Council's own Strategic Equality Objectives, particularly SEO 3 (Physical Access) and SEO 4 (Communication Access).

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The LEADER budget has been confirmed as £2,642,994. As previously reported, the new RDP has an agreed match funding budget of £103,410 p/a which has been factored into and agreed in the Medium Term Financial Plan and represents a £11,000 saving on the previous programme.
- 6.2 The £103,410 funding represents Caerphilly County Borough's Council's contribution to the RDP and will cover match funding for staff costs and overheads as well as unfunded/ineligible costs associated with the RDP. Should any other organisations/groups wish to bid in for funding to the RDP LEADER Implementation budget, they will need to provide their own match funding.
- 6.3 The Administrative Body (Running and Animation) costs are 100% funded by RDP and cover officer time and some overheads in Regeneration and Planning and Corporate Finance, together with costs associated with running the LAG and promoting the programme.
- 6.4 The remaining costs (Implementation) are allocated for the delivery of the RDP including delivery staff and procured projects.

## **7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 Under the current RDP structure, there are 9 posts employed within the Countryside & Landscape Service on fixed term contracts, in accordance with the funding arrangements.
- 7.2 Other staff from Corporate Finance and Planning and Regeneration will be part-funded through the RDP Programme but are on permanent contracts.

## **8. CONSULTATIONS**

- 8.1 All responses from consultations have been incorporated in the report.

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 9.1 Cabinet is asked to endorse the commencement of the RDP Programme in Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent CBs.

## **10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 10.1 To ensure that Caerphilly county borough continues to benefit from the funding and opportunities offered by the RDP LEADER programme.

## **11. STATUTORY POWER**

- 11.1 Local Government Acts 1972 and 2000.

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Consultees:

- Cllr Ken James – Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning & Sustainable Development
- Chris Burns – Interim Chief Executive
- Pauline Elliott – Head of Regeneration & Planning
- Lynne Donovan – Acting Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development
- Mike Eedy – Finance Manager
- Paul Adams – Senior Assistant Accountant
- Phil Griffiths – Manager, Countryside & Landscape Service
- Paul Cooke – Team Leader, Sustainable Development & Living Environment
- Allan Dallimore – Team Leader, Urban Renewal
- Tina McMahon – Community Regeneration Manager, Community Regeneration
- Ian MacVicar – Group Manager, Operations
- Antony Bolter – Group Manager, Strategy and Funding
- Dave Roberts – Principal Group Accountant, Corporate Finance
- Paula Beaman – Grants Manager, Corporate Finance
- Gail Williams – Acting Head of Legal Services & Monitoring Officer
- Lisa Lane – Solicitor, Legal Services
- David Thomas – Senior Policy Officer (Equalities & Welsh Language)
- Shaunna Barnett – HR Officer
- David Ware – Principal External Funding Officer, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Background Papers:

RDP Staff Structure

Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent Local Development Strategy

Cabinet Report 12<sup>th</sup> November 2014

Welsh Government LEADER Guidance Notes

Appendices:

Appendix 1 Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent Local Action Group Terms of Reference