



CAERPHILLY HOMES TASK GROUP – 18TH FEBRUARY 2016

SUBJECT: REVIEW OF COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FUNDS

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR COMMUNITIES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To outline a proposal to absorb the WHQS Community Improvement Fund and Community Safety Fund into the Environmental Programme budget. The report is seeking the views of CHTG prior to its presentation to Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Following the ballot in February 2012, the Council agreed that it would deliver the promises made in its Offer Document to tenants and deliver WHQS by 2019/2020. It also gave a commitment to delivering numerous additional benefits which were also outlined in the Offer Document, which would add value to the WHQS programme and help deliver the Council's ambition of using the £200 million WHQS investment as a catalyst to Transform Homes, Lives and Communities.
- 2.2 These additional benefits included the creation of a Community Improvement Fund and Community Safety Fund. The Council also created a Local Employment Fund.
- 2.3 The Local Employment Fund has been relatively successful and will be subject shortly to a separate report.
- 2.4 £50,000 is allocated to each fund annually.
- 2.5 The Community Improvement Fund and Community Safety Fund have not met the original expectations and it is advocated these are now incorporated as part of the Environmental Programme budget.

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 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 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."

3.4 The delivery of the WHQS environmental programme is coterminous with the aims of the Council's Single Integrated Plan 2013-2017 which aims to 'improve standards of housing and communities, giving appropriate access to services across the county borough' and the recently approved, Caerphilly Poverty Strategy 2015.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 The Community Improvement Fund was designed specifically to foster community development and cohesion by enabling community groups to bid for funding to support local initiatives and projects that would help improve the immediate environment.
- 4.2 The Community Safety Fund was created to support community safety initiatives and interventions that would directly and indirectly benefit Council tenants including creating safer communities, tackling anti social behaviour, reducing crime and the fear of crime, supporting victims of anti social behaviour and domestic violence.
- 4.3 Potential applicants to the Community Improvement Fund apply for funding via a two stage process that complies with the Council's standing orders and requires evidence of community support, synergy with Communities First outcomes and an indication of the benefits that will be delivered. Applications to the Community Safety Fund have been via internal departments. Proposals under both funds are subject to consultation with the CHTG and decisions are then made by the Head of Service under delegated powers.
- 4.4 Since 2013/14 a total of only £18,604 has been approved from the Community Improvement Fund to support the following organisations (although not all monies have been claimed):
- Rhymney Allotments Society
 - Oaklands Hall Allotments Association
 - Pen Y Dre Tenants and Residents Association
 - Tarragon Educational Gardens
- 4.5 Further applications have been approved for Britannia Community House, Graig Y Rhacca Resource Centre and Neuadd St Catwg and not claimed.
- 4.6 Since 2013/14, a total of £43,350 has been approved from the Community Safety Fund out of a potential £150,000.
- 4.7 Each year there is a significant underspend in the funds allocated to the Community Improvement Fund and Community Safety Fund.
- 4.8 Meetings have been held with relevant individuals and partnerships to promote the availability of funds and marketing literature produced and circulated. The funds have also been promoted via social media and support made available to those organisations seeking assistance to complete the required paperwork.
- 4.9 Despite these efforts, the number and diversity of organisations requesting funding has been minimal. The Community Improvement Fund has, in the main, been accessed predominantly by Allotment Associations located throughout the borough to increase access to facilities for members and interested parties within local communities.
- 4.10 The Community Safety Fund has supported the purchase and installation of CCTV cameras in areas of the borough exhibiting high levels of anti social behaviour and to support the work of the Community Safety Partnership in relation to target hardening measures to help protect victims of domestic violence and anti social behaviour.
- 4.11 Whilst many of the projects supported have been worthy the Community Improvement Fund and Community Safety Fund have not delivered the original expectations. They were both designed to increase community cohesion and address local priorities.

4.12 It is therefore proposed that both the Community Improvement Fund and the Community Safety Fund are absorbed into the Environmental Programme budget. It should be noted that they were top sliced from this budget originally.

4.13 The WHQS Environmental Programme is currently under development. If any projects emerge that would previously have been candidates for the two funds they will, if appropriate, be incorporated within proposals for specific estates and be subject to the consultation arrangements that will inform the decision making as to which project proposals can be supported.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no equalities implications arising directly as a result of this report however, it maybe necessary to complete an Equalities Impact Assessment depending on the nature of individual project proposals.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 If the recommendation is agreed there will be no further separate allocation from the Community Improvement Fund or Community Safety Fund from the 2016/17 financial year onwards.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

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

8. CONSULTATIONS

8.1 Comments received have been incorporated in the report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 The Caerphilly Homes Task Group recommend to the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet that the separate Community Improvement Fund and Community Safety Fund are terminated and the allocation apportionments absorbed within the Environmental Programme budget.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 To recognise that the funds are not meeting the purpose for which they were established.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 Housing Acts 1985, 1996, 2004. This is a Cabinet function.

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