



CABINET – 30TH MARCH 2016

SUBJECT: REVIEW OF COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FUNDS

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

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- 1.1 The attached report was considered by the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 1st March 2016, having previously been considered by the Caerphilly Homes Task Group on 18th February 2016. The report sought the views of Members on proposals to absorb the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) Community Improvement Fund and Community Safety Fund into the WHQS Environmental Programme budget, prior to its presentation to Cabinet for approval.
 - 1.2 Members were advised that following the stock transfer ballot in February 2012, the Council agreed that it would deliver the promises made in its Offer Document to tenants and deliver the WHQS by 2019/2020. It also gave a commitment to delivering numerous additional benefits 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. These additional benefits included the creation of a Community Improvement Fund and Community Safety Fund. The Council also created a Local Employment Fund, which has been relatively successful and will be the subject of a separate future report. £50,000 is allocated to each fund annually.
 - 1.3 Officers explained that each year, despite a number of promotional approaches by staff, there is a significant under spend in the funds allocated to the Community Improvement Fund and Community Safety Fund. As the Community Improvement Fund and Community Safety Fund have not met their original expectations (in that they were designed to increase community cohesion and address local priorities) it is therefore advocated that these Funds be incorporated into the WHQS Environmental Programme budget.
 - 1.4 It was noted that the Caerphilly Homes Task Group raised the matter of future applications to the fund and that it was determined that 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. The Task Group also raised concerns around the allocation of funding and projects in the larger estates across the borough and sought reassurance that, when work on the Environmental Programme begins, consideration would be given to all estates. The Caerphilly Homes Task Group (by a majority vote and in noting there was one abstention) subsequently supported the report recommendation.
 - 1.5 During the course of the ensuing debate, Officers responded to queries regarding current and future administration of these Funds, outlined eligibility criteria in respect of such funding, and highlighted the promotional work and engagement processes carried out by Council staff to encourage take-up of these funds. Reference was made to the use of the Community Safety Fund to support the purchase and installation of mobile CCTV cameras for use on the housing estates. Discussion also took place regarding how the Environmental Programme would

address mixed tenure estates and whether it would benefit private tenants in addition to Council tenants. Officers explained that Council-owned sections of these estates would be identified within the programme but that all residents on such estates would be eligible for inclusion in the engagement process relating to the programme.

- 1.6 Members sought clarification on the reasons for the proposed change in engagement strategy in respect of these Funds. Officers reiterated that despite their best efforts, the number and diversity of organisations requesting funding has been minimal, with feedback suggesting the application process was too complex, and explained that absorbing these Funds into the Environmental Programme will be a more proactive way of engaging communities in improving the quality of their environment. A number of Members stated that they had been unaware of these Funds and expressed disappointment as to their proposed withdrawal. A Member queried whether these Funds could still be accessed for community initiative purposes at the present time and Officers indicated that this was contingent on the outcome of the forthcoming Cabinet meeting to consider these proposals, in that future applications will not be processed in the same way in future if Cabinet are minded to approve the proposals.
- 1.7 Following consideration of the report, it was moved and seconded that the recommendation from the Caerphilly Homes Task Group as set out in the report be supported. By a show of hands (and in noting there were 6 against with 1 abstention) the motion was declared lost. The Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee therefore did not support the recommendation to Cabinet that was set out in the Officer's report.
- 1.8 Members are asked to consider the report recommendation and the views of the Scrutiny Committee as set out above.

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Appendices:

Appendix 1 Report to Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 1st March 2016 – Agenda Item 8