



CAERPHILLY HOMES TASK GROUP – 2ND NOVEMBER 2017

SUBJECT: COMMUNITY BENEFITS DELIVERED AS A RESULT OF WHQS

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR – COMMUNITIES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise members of the progress made in relation to delivering against the Council's ambition to ensure that its £200 million WHQS investment in homes transforms lives and communities.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Following the ballot in February 2012 the Council made a commitment to ensure that its £200m investment in homes would also help transform lives and communities.
- 2.2 In order to deliver the ambition of ensuring that the Council's investment in homes also created new opportunities to transform lives and communities, a series of core requirements (mandatory) and non-core (non mandatory) requirements were built into the WHQS internal works contracts and also the Council's Supply Partner contract with Robert Price.
- 2.3 As a result of the commitment to deliver the Welsh Housing Quality Standard by 2020, the Council has also delivered a number of employment related opportunities directly.

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 community benefits is coterminous with the aims of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 which requires public bodies to work towards a shared vision comprising 7 goals and adopt the 5 "Ways of Working". The goals and the 5 Ways of Working will underpin the delivery of the programme and include planning and acting for the long term, integration, involvement, collaboration and prevention.
- 3.5 The delivery of community benefits links directly with the goal identified in the Future Generations Act to create a more prosperous Wales through helping to directly create new employment and training opportunities.

- 3.6 The creation of community benefits also relates directly to the ambition to create a resilient Wales. The inclusion of Community Benefits as a core requirement into the contracts has created additional employment and training opportunities for local people which creates greater financial resilience on an individual basis; helps sustain the local economy and build resilient communities. The added value delivered via the non-core commitments to work with local schools and support local communities also contributes towards the creation of a more resilient Wales.
- 3.7 The delivery of community benefits is coterminous with the goal to create healthier communities through improving access to employment and opportunities to increase skills and learning which in turn contributes towards improved mental health and overall well being.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 The Council has included a suite of core and non-core community benefit requirements into its internal works and supply partner contracts in order to maximise the benefits of its WHQS investment and benefit the borough as a whole. The delivery of core community benefits applies to Keepmoat, Contract Services, Vinci Facilities and Robert Price.
- 4.2 In relation to the internal works contractors appointed by the Council, unfortunately Contract Services who were responsible for the delivery of internal works in the lower Rhymney Valley, have recently ceased trading. This was the only internal works contractor that directly employed its own workforce; therefore this will have a detrimental impact on the employment opportunities made available by external contractors for the remainder of the year. The figures quoted within this report however, relate to the first six months of the year.
- 4.3 A copy of the core and non-core requirements which contractors are required to deliver are attached in appendix 1 which also outlines progress made to date.

Core Requirements – Targeted Recruitment and Training

Full Time Permanent Opportunities

- 4.4 Good progress has been made by all contractors in relation to achieving their targets in relation to the number of permanent full time opportunities created. In total, the internal works contractors have created 71 permanent full time roles as a result of their contract to deliver WHQS works on behalf of the Council.
- 4.5 To date and as a result of the delivery of the WHQS programme, 106 full time opportunities have been created within the Council to date (across WHQS and HRO).
- 4.6 The additional work being awarded to the Council's in house team to deliver the sheltered housing programme will bring additional opportunities as will the work delivered by HRO to assist in the delivery of the WHQS programme.
- 4.7 The opportunities created by the Council have directly benefited the local economy. Approximately 80% of the workforce reside within the county borough and as a result spend their salary locally.

Employment Opportunities for Long Term Unemployed

- 4.8 Since the start of the programme all contractors have found it difficult to recruit candidates who would be deemed long term unemployed (unemployed longer than 26 weeks). This is largely due to the fact that potential candidates who are unemployed for longer than 26 weeks are not 'work ready' and have a number of barriers to overcome before entering the workplace. As a result, long term unemployed individuals are being encouraged via the Welsh Government's LIFT programme (delivered in Caerphilly by Communities First) to access work placement opportunities with the Council's contractors. The LIFT programme

sought to assist individuals who are deemed long term unemployed from workless households to access funding to overcome barriers such as transport, clothing etc. and provided individuals with mentoring and ongoing support both prior to and during their work placement. Training was also provided via LIFT in areas such as manual handling, health and safety at work and basic asbestos awareness. CSCS cards were provided to those successfully completing a 2 week placement programme.

- 4.9 Due to Welsh Government changes, the LIFT programme is being absorbed into the Welsh Government's new employment support programme which will enhance the employment support being delivered in priority areas via the Council's community regeneration team. The £50,000 allocated to LIFT in previous years will now be allocated to support the delivery of the replacement Communities First employment programme which will be targeted at key housing areas.
- 4.10 Since the start of the programme, Keepmoat have employed 3 people deemed long term unemployed, Vinci 1, Contract Services 3 and Robert Price, 4.

Apprenticeships

- 4.11 Since the start of the programme, Keepmoat have created 8 new apprenticeship opportunities (against a contract requirement of 24); Contract Services 6; Vinci 3 (against a contract requirement of 12 each) and Robert Price, 4. In order for the figures to be counted as an outcome, an apprentice must serve a minimum of 52 weeks.
- 4.12 A total of 43 apprenticeship opportunities have also been created within the Council's WHQS and HRO teams to support the delivery of the WHQS programme (cumulative total).

Work Placements (16+)

- 4.13 During 2016/17, Keepmoat have successfully run a two week course alongside the LIFT team entitled 'Induction to Construction'; 12 participants took part and received reference and the opportunity to sign up with a local employment agency.
- 4.14 Verbal commitments have been made by Vinci during the year to run a similar programme in the north of the county borough; however a suitable date has yet to be identified. It should be noted that Vinci's ability to deliver community benefits similar to those delivered by Contract Services and Keepmoat is restricted due to the fact they have chosen to have only one member of staff dedicated to undertaking work related to the delivery of community benefits, 2 days per week.
- 4.15 Furthermore, Vinci's efforts to date are still concentrated primarily on ensuring that they deliver against their contractual requirement to deliver WHQS improvements to Council homes in the north of the borough. Vinci's performance with regard to community benefits and the delivery of the WHQS internal works programme is being monitored in line with the terms and conditions of the contract by the WHQS Project Board. This has resulted in senior managers from Vinci attending Board meetings and formal letters being issued.
- 4.16 Including the 'Induction to Construction' participants, Keepmoat have delivered a total of 22 work placement opportunities (120 are required throughout the contract duration), Vinci 5, Contract Services, 7 and Robert Price 17.

Graduate Employment Opportunities

- 4.17 Both Keepmoat, Vinci and Robert Price have created a number of graduate opportunities to date. 2 have been created by Keepmoat, 2 by Vinci and 1 by Robert Price. The graduate opportunities created by Vinci are both Trainee Quantity Surveyor roles. In Keepmoat, graduate opportunities have been created in Surveying and Site Management.

Education

- 4.18 Core requirements regarding the provision of support to local schools have also been incorporated into the internal works contracts.
- 4.19 Both Keepmoat and Contract Services have developed very positive relationships with local schools.
- 4.20 As a result of signing up to the Careers Wales, Business Class programme, Keepmoat, have developed a fruitful relationship with Blackwood Comprehensive School and also Penllwyn Primary. Appendix 2 outlines some of the work undertaken with the primary and comprehensive school. The relationship developed by Keepmoat and Blackwood Comprehensive is intended to facilitate the sharing of good practice, transfer of business acumen, promotion of career opportunities and practical opportunities for engagement between business and young people.
- 4.21 Contract Services have been developing their relationship with St Martin's School, Caerphilly. Efforts to date have focused on providing support to the Family Engagement Officer (funded by Communities First) based at the School. Further commitments relating to the refurbishment of the boys toilets and the erection of a poly tunnel in which the young people can learn horticultural skills have been made but unfortunately Contract Services ceased trading after just commencing the works to the boys toilets. This work has subsequently been completed, by the Council's in-house team.
- 4.22 All internal works contractors are also encouraged to work alongside the Council's procurement team to deliver a series of 'Meet the Buyer' events; provide training and transfer of business acumen; advertise Tier 2 contract opportunities via Sell2Wales and ensure the prompt payment of sub-contractors (within 10 days).
- 4.23 Two WHQS 'Meet the Buyer' events have taken place during the last six months which attracted a number of potential local sub-contractors. The training and transfer of business acumen is ongoing and provided via toolbox talks, online training modules and demonstrations.
- 4.24 All internal works contractors claim to pay sub-contractors within a 10 day period and the Council is currently awaiting evidence to support this statement.

Non Core Community Benefits

- 4.25 All internal works contractors have committed to create a community fund which can be used to support projects that have been identified via the Community Regeneration team that will benefit the community, leave a lasting legacy and meet the aims of the Future Generations Act. The Council does not hold the funds and hence the contractors are also required to agree how the funds will be best utilised. The monies allocated by Keepmoat will be used to support ongoing engagement activities with Blackwood Comprehensive and Penllwyn Primary School. The fund held by Vinci will support the refurbishment of Gilfach Community Centre later this year which will be undertaken in conjunction with Robert Price and Rixonway.
- 4.26 In December 2016, the commitment to deliver community benefits also resulted in all internal works contractors, Robert Price and Robert Price sub-contractors together with the Council's other contractors (including Alun Griffiths, Castell Howell, F I Walters etc.) supporting the Council's annual foodbank collection. An overwhelming number of donations and monetary contributions were made which provided much needed support to each of the four foodbanks in the borough, young care leavers and older people nominated by Social Services. It is anticipated that a similar level of support will be provided Christmas 2017. Vinci provided support to wrap and pack over 120 boxes which were used to transport the items to those in need across the borough.

- 4.27 Robert Price have supported the development of a community tool bank in Graig Y Rhacca which aims to encourage local people to improve their homes and gardens, increase skills and confidence and undertake small DIY projects. The toolbank project is currently on hold whilst an asset mapping inventory is undertaken.
- 4.28 Robert Price also supported the provision of 120 water bottles to Fochriw Primary School who, through the Healthy Schools programme were looking to highlight the benefits of drinking fresh water to their pupils.
- 4.29 It is not mandatory for the Contractors to become a Living Wage employer however the Council encourages all its contractors to register with the Living Wage Commission. Both Contract Services and Robert Price are registered with the Living Wage Commission and therefore commit to paying all employees the Living Wage as a minimum.
- 4.30 Prepare for Work packs have also been provided to LIFT and Communities for Work participants as a result of a voluntary donation from Service Care Solutions, a recruitment agency who have helped supply agency staff to support the delivery of the Council's WHQS programme.
- 4.31 As part of the commitment made in the Council's Offer Document to tenants, the Council agreed to create a Local Employment Fund totalling £50,000 per annum to support the delivery of projects aimed at providing tenants and residents with support to access training or employment opportunities. Following a change to the way in which projects of that nature are delivered, it was agreed to allocate the £50,000 for 2016/17 to support the delivery of the Welsh Government's LIFT programme which aims to provide bespoke and intensive support to workless households in the most deprived areas of the county borough. During 2016/17, the LIFT programme provided intense support to 83 participants, of which 57 (69%) were Council tenants.
- 4.32 Monthly contractor monitoring meetings that focus specifically on the delivery of community benefits are scheduled and attended by the Strategic Coordination Manager and officers from WHQS, Communications, Procurement and Community Regeneration.
- 4.33 All internal works contractors and the Supply Partner are required to report their achievements to Welsh Government via the completion of the Value Wales Toolkit on an annual basis.

5. WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS

- 5.1 The WHQS programme contributes to the Well-being Goals as set out in Links to Strategy above. It is consistent with the five ways of working as defined within the sustainable development principle in the Act as outlined in section 3.

6. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 This is an information report; therefore there are no potential equality implications and no requirement to complete a full Equalities Impact Assessment.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Communities First LIFT programme will be absorbed into new Welsh Government employment support arrangements later this year. As a result, the annual contribution of £50,000 will be allocated to support the delivery of the new employment support programme which will be specifically targeted at priority housing areas.

8. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

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

9. CONSULTATIONS

9.1 Responses from consultees have been incorporated within this report.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 That the contents of the report are noted and that the commitment to support delivery of the Welsh Government's new employment support arrangements is endorsed.

11. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

11.1 To advise members of the current position in respect of the delivery of community benefits as part of the Council's Welsh Housing Quality Standard programme.

12. STATUTORY POWER

12.1 Housing Acts 1985, 1996, 2004, 2014 and Local Government Act 2000.

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Appendices:
Appendix 1 – Community Benefits Spreadsheet
Appendix 2 – Case Studies – to be circulated at the meeting