



## REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 16TH SEPTEMBER 2014

**SUBJECT: MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN: MAINTENANCE OF COMMUNITY SCHEMES FUNDING**

**REPORT BY: ACTING DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

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### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To consider Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) contributions from the Community Schemes budget in accordance with the Cabinet report – next stages of MTFP – 2015/16 and 2016/17 dated 16 April 2014. This report is seeking the views of Members prior to its presentation to Cabinet.

### 2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 This report is put before Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee to consider the Maintenance of Community Schemes funding in assisting the Local Authority to meet its obligations in respect of the 2014/17 Medium Term Financial Plan.
- 2.2 The Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) agreed by Council on the 26<sup>th</sup> February 2014 identified an estimated savings requirement of £6.5m for 2015/16 and £6.9m for 2016/17. This was based on an indicative reduction in Welsh Government (WG) funding of 1.34% for 2015/16 and, in the absence of further guidance from WG, an assumed reduction of a further 1.34% for 2016/17.
- 2.3 The budget strategy agreed by Council for 2015/16 and 2016/17 is currently being taken forward via two main strands. The first of these is further savings proposals for Members to consider in respect of up to 3% efficiency savings. These efficiency targets require savings of circa £5m and will be applied to those statutory and essential services that the Authority has to deliver. The second strand of the agreed budget strategy is a review of discretionary services, including those areas of statutory provision where delivery exceeds the minimum required levels, with a view to identifying savings proposals totalling over £8m.
- 2.4 Members of the Scrutiny Committee will be aware of the letter from the Minister for Local Government on the 24<sup>th</sup> June 2014 informing Local Authorities that due to a range of emerging cost pressures, particularly in the NHS, further significant reductions in the Local Government financial settlement are now anticipated for 2015/16 and beyond. This has serious consequences, as WG is now asking Local Authorities to consider how they would respond to funding reductions of up to 4.5%. A report was presented to Cabinet in the 16<sup>th</sup> July 2014, which identified that a cut in WG funding of 3% would increase the required savings for 2015/16 and 2016/17 from the current planning figure of £13.4m to £22.2m. A cut of 4.5% will increase the savings target to £30.1m. A further report will be presented to Cabinet early in the autumn when the position has been examined in more detail.

### 3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

3.1 The report links directly to the efficient use of funding provided for the Maintenance of Community Assets, prioritised towards Communities First Wards, as reported to Cabinet and Council in 2006/2007 Revenue Budget reports in February 2006.

3.2 Contributing to the Healthier Caerphilly, Safer Caerphilly, Learning Caerphilly, Prosperous Caerphilly, and Greener Caerphilly priorities within the Single Integrated Plan, Caerphilly Delivers.

3.2 Corporate Aspirations:

Our communities must be a safe, green and clean place to live to improve resident's quality of life

Our goal is that every child should have the best start in life, and the opportunity to achieve success as a young person and as an adult.

We want to enable our communities to make healthy lifestyle choices to improve citizen's quality of life.

### 4. THE REPORT

4.1 The Council's policy of maintaining community assets was funded in previous years from part of the Deprivation Grant, which the Authority received from Welsh Government. In 2010/2011 Deprivation Grant funding was transferred into the Council's Revenue Support Grant, but the Council has continued to support and fund community asset initiatives.

The Maintenance of Community Schemes budget for the 2014/2015 financial year is £252,000 this was reduced from £400,000 in 2013/2014 to address an unavoidable additional cost pressure in respect of care home fees in the Directorate of Social Services.

A report to Cabinet on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2014 sought and gained approval to allocate this budget to fund a range of Community Schemes. The schemes approved are summarised in table 1 below.

TABLE 1	PROPOSAL	ALLOCATION £000
	Community Response Team (NCS) plus materials	100
	Urban Renewal (town centre areas of Caerphilly, Bargoed, Risca, Blackwood, Ystrad Mynach)	20
	Community Partnerships (items identified by Community Regeneration Officers)	35
	Litter bins - improvement or replacement	7
	Invasive Plant Species Officer - contribution to salary	15
	Parks to be allocated to cemeteries, parks east and parks west	40
	Living Environment Local Environmental Quality Partnership	10
	Community Payback (graffiti removal, community clean-ups)	10
	Allotment Strategy Implementation	5
	Maintenance budget for community schemes	10
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>252</b>

#### 4.2 Options for Savings In Relation To the Community Schemes Budget

Options are considered in this report, including deleting the full Community Schemes budget of £252,000 (appendix 1). Individual schemes could be retained or deleted and appendix 2 provides detailed implications notes for each scheme listed in table 1 above.

#### **4.2.1 Delete the Community Schemes Budget**

Deleting the Community Schemes budget would generate a saving of £252,000 to help achieve MTFP (Medium Term Financial Plan) savings in 2015/2016. However this would result in the removal of funding for all the schemes noted in table 1 above, the implications of which are noted in appendix 2.

Many of the initiatives presently funded from the Community Schemes budget, would, if they were to continue, need to be funded from other core service maintenance budgets in relation to street scene, town centres, vandalism and graffiti, parks, playgrounds, cemeteries and allotments and street cleaning. Other Community Scheme funded initiatives involving Community Partnership projects, Living Environment Local Environmental Quality projects and Community payback via the Probation service would all be curtailed.

#### **4.2.2 Reduce the Community Scheme Budget**

A further reduction in the Community Scheme budget from £252,000 could be considered by deleting some of the schemes listed in table 1 of this report and detailed in appendix 2. A saving could also be made by reducing the Community Schemes funding in 2015/2016 and reprioritising the schemes to be funded, taking into account the impact of deleting schemes in terms of employment, impact on the community and existence of alternative options for funding from other core budgets.

### **5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The empowerment aspect of the community partnership allocation is especially important for minority groups in the community as they often feel less empowered due to their particular circumstances. Further, the work undertaken in improving seating, pathways and reducing anti-social behaviour has a greater positive impact on elderly and disabled people in the community. Finally, the Community Payback involvement in dealing with graffiti supports the swift removal of graffiti that may contain discriminatory, extremist or hate crime phrases.

### **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Deletion of the full Community Schemes budget would generate a budget saving of £252,000
- 6.2 Deletion of the Community Schemes budget would place added pressure on core maintenance, replacement and enhancement budgets in relation to street scene, town centres, street cleaning, parks, playgrounds and allotments, which may require a need to reprioritise some core budgets.
- 6.3 Deleting some of the initiatives funded from the Community Schemes budget and/or reducing the overall funding and reprioritising schemes to be funded, would generate a budget saving, the value of which will depend on which schemes are retained and at what funding value.

### **7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 As detailed in appendix 2, some of the schemes funded including the Community Response Team and the part funding of the Invasive Plant species officer have direct employment implications. The Invasive Species Officer brings in an income- and this was included in the 14/15 MTFP. If the 15k for his salary has to be funded by the income he raises then we do not make the saving we have already offered - and which is expected to come in every year.
- 7.2 The personnel implications of agreed savings proposals will need to be carefully managed and staff will need to be fully supported to identify redeployment opportunities wherever

possible. Consultation with staff and their representatives will need to be undertaken as appropriate.

## **8. CONSULTATIONS**

- 8.1 This report has been sent to the Consultees listed below and all comments received are reflected in this report prior to further discussion by Cabinet.

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 9.1 That Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee Members consider and comment upon the contents of this report.

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

- 10.1 To ensure that the views of the Scrutiny Committee are considered prior to any proposals being presented to Cabinet.

## **11. STATUTORY POWER**

- 11.1 Local Government Acts 1972 and 2000

Author: Mike Eedy, Finance Manager  
Consultees: Cllr. Dave Poole, Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services  
Cllr. Ken James, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning & Sustainable Development  
Cllr. Tom Williams, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transportation & Engineering  
Cllr. D.T. Davies, Chair Regeneration & Environment Scrutiny Committee  
Cllr. E.M. Aldworth, Vice-Chair Regeneration & Environment Scrutiny Committee  
Sandra Aspinall, Acting Deputy Chief Executive  
Nicole Scammell, Acting Director of Corporate Services  
Tony Maher, Assistant Director Planning and Strategy  
Stephen Harris, Acting Head of Corporate Finance  
Robert Hartshorn, Head of Public Protection  
Terry Shaw, Head of Engineering Services  
Mark S Williams, Head of Community & Leisure Services  
Pauline Elliott, Head of Regeneration & Planning  
Gail Williams, Monitoring Officer/Principal Solicitor  
David A. Thomas, Senior Policy Officer (Equalities and Welsh Language)  
Sian Phillips, HR Manager

Background Papers: Cabinet Report of 16th April 2014 entitled "Next stages of the MTFP – 2015/16 & 2016/17"

Appendices:  
Appendix 1 Community Schemes Funding: Option 1 Full Deletion of Community Schemes  
Appendix 2 Community Scheme Funding: Implications Notes for each Scheme Initiative