



## CAERPHILLY HOMES TASK GROUP - 30TH OCTOBER 2014

**SUBJECT: COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT FUND**

**REPORT BY: INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

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### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 This report has been drafted for consultation purposes. Members of the Caerphilly Homes Task Group are requested to note the contents of the report and provide any comments or observations they may have to the report author / Head of Programmes (WHQS).
- 1.2 Funding decisions relating to the Community Improvement Fund will be made under delegated powers to the Head of Programmes (WHQS).

### **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 £210 million WHQS investment as a catalyst to Transform Homes, Lives and Communities.
- 2.2 These additional benefits include the creation of a Community Improvement Fund that has been designed specifically to foster community development and cohesion by enabling community groups to bid for funding to support local initiatives and projects. It will fund projects that directly contribute towards the Council's aim of Transforming Homes, Lives and Communities and to one or more of the following Communities First priorities; developing prosperous communities, learning communities and healthier communities.
- 2.3 The Community Improvement Fund will provide a capital grant of up to £5,000 per project proposal. The grant must be spent within one year of the approval.
- 2.4 A maximum of £50,000 will be approved annually for multiple projects.
- 2.5 The Fund is intended to benefit community groups based within Caerphilly county borough and provide direct benefits to tenants and residents of the county borough.
- 2.6 Groups wishing to apply for funding need to be constituted and have a group bank account. New or emerging community groups need to partner with a constituted group / organisation who can apply for and administer any grant awarded on their behalf.
- 2.7 Groups also need to demonstrate that they have consulted with and engaged the local community in developing their project. The Community Improvement Fund will not support groups / projects that do not have the support of the community and will not benefit the wider community.

- 2.8 Grant funding awarded from the Community Improvement Fund can be used to improve the general appearance of estates, to provide new or improved parking, better lighting, planting, landscaping, or play areas. It could also be used by the local community to better increase their understanding of the needs of their area and to encourage greater participation in community activities.
- 2.9 Funding from the Community Improvement Fund is sought by Neuadd St Catwg Community Hall and the Friends of Navigation Colliery, Crumlin.

### **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 achieve 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 Relevant policy documents include the National Housing Strategy “Sustainable Homes” WAG; the Council’s Community Strategy; Corporate Improvement Plan; Safer Caerphilly Community Safety Plan; Regeneration Strategy; Children and Young People’s Plan; Tackling Poverty Action Plan 2012-2016 and Building Resilient Communities.
- 3.4 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.”

### **4. THE REPORT**

#### **Neuadd St Catwg Community Hall**

- 4.1 The CHTG is asked to consider an application to the Community Improvement Fund by Neuadd St Catwg Community Hall to enhance the appearance of and improve access to the Community Hall and surrounding area.
- 4.2 The application is made on behalf of the Neuadd St Catwg Community Hall Committee and Communities First by GAVO who are also a partner in the project
- 4.3 The community hall is located within Neuadd St Catwg Church and is currently surrounded by overgrown and unsightly areas. The Church and Hall are primary focal points for the community and are adjacent to a busy road.
- 4.4 The project aims to improve access to, and enhance the appearance of, the areas surrounding the Hall for the benefit of current users and to encourage new users. Detailed works will include removing all weeds, prune and trimming existing plants, laying new concrete slabs, adding garden furniture and garden games in order to increase the usability of the outside space for mother and toddler groups, birthday parties and environmental education.
- 4.5 Volunteers currently participating in Communities First projects will undertake the work to improve the gardens. Many of the volunteers are unemployed and seeking to improve their skills to increase their employability.
- 4.6 Materials and supplies will be procured via CCBC’s standing orders procedure. As per the requirements of the fund, two quotes will need to be received from independent suppliers before payments in arrears will be made.

- 4.7 Permission to undertake the improvements has been granted by the Neuadd St Catwg Community Hall Committee.
- 4.8 Evidence of community consultation and support for the project has been received.
- 4.9 Communities First and Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations have endorsed the proposal and will be engaging with local people in order to provide support and undertake the work.
- 4.10 The total cost of the project is estimated to be £8,200.00. The Association have secured £3200.00 from partners including Communities First, GAVO, Groundwork and NIACE. Communities First are contributing £1000 towards refreshments and transport for volunteers. Groundwork are contributing £1500 towards the costs associated with volunteers undertaking LANTRA training whilst participating in the project thereby increasing their employability and skill levels. NIACE will contribute £800 to finance a garden design course that the volunteers will complete prior to starting the project.
- 4.11 The contribution requested from the Community Improvement Fund is £5,000.00.
- 4.12 The project is coterminous with the aims, objectives and award criteria of the Community Improvement Fund. Tenants living within the adjacent housing areas will benefit from the improvements undertaken as a result of the Community Improvement Fund.

#### **Friends of Navigation Colliery, Crumlin**

- 4.13 CHTG are also asked to consider a request for funding from the Community Improvement Fund by the Friends of Navigation Colliery, Crumlin.
- 4.14 The Friends of Navigation Colliery (consisting of 20 core volunteers) aim to regenerate the former colliery site in Crumlin in order to generate employment, sustainable green energy and improve the overall quality of life within the area.
- 4.15 The redevelopment of the site will require significant investment.
- 4.16 A £5,000 contribution from the Community Improvement Fund is sought to finance the estimated costs associated with undertaking a Refurbishment Asbestos Survey in accordance with HSE guidance note MDHS77.
- 4.17 Only one independent quote for the survey and testing work has been provided (Asbestos Safety Management Ltd). The quote is based on undertaking the survey work to two of the ten buildings within the site. The Friends of Navigation Colliery have made an assumption that to undertake a survey for all 10 buildings the cost (including VAT), would amount to £5400.00. £400.00 would be provided from the Friends of Navigation's own funds.
- 4.18 It is a requirement of the Community Improvement Fund that two independent quotes are provided.
- 4.19 A community consultation questionnaire template has been provided however copies of completed questionnaires have not been submitted hence there is no evidence to suggest that the wider community support the project proposal.
- 4.20 A letter of support has been received from the South Ebbw Fach Communities First Cluster Manager (Blaenau Gwent). There is no evidence to confirm that the Communities First Caerphilly Mid Valleys East Cluster have been involved or consulted.
- 4.21 The proposal does not directly comply with the aims, objectives and award criteria of the Community Improvement Fund. There is no evidence to suggest that tenants or residents living within the locality will benefit directly from the asbestos surveys proposed.

## **5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 An EqIA screening will be completed in accordance with the Council's Equalities Consultation and Monitoring Guidance and no potential for unlawful discrimination and for low level or minor negative impact have been identified, therefore a full EqIA has not been carried out.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The Community Improvement Fund provides a capital grant to community groups of up to £5,000 to support community projects that meet one or more of the Communities First priorities and add value to the WHQS programme through improving the appearance of communities, amenities within communities and / or increasing participation by communities throughout the county borough.
- 6.2 An annual budget of £50,000 per annum is available.
- 6.3 Neuadd St Catwg Community Hall are seeking a grant of £5,000.00 from the Community Improvement Fund.
- 6.4 The Friends of Navigation Colliery are seeking a grant of £5,000.00 from the Community Improvement Fund.
- 6.5 Payments are made in arrears upon receipt of invoices.

## **7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

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

## **8. CONSULTATIONS**

- 8.1 No comments received on the report.

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 9.1 Members of the CHTG are requested to consider the contents of the report and consider whether they wish to support either or both applications.

## **10. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 10.1 To deliver and meet the aims and objectives of the WHQS Programme.

## **11. STATUTORY POWER**

- 11.1 Housing Acts and Local Government Acts.

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