

Appendix two

Community Empowerment Fund – Community engagement guidance for local councillors

Overview:

Caerphilly County Borough Council is committed to supporting communities to become strong and resilient, and recognise that one of our county borough's greatest assets is the thriving network of local community groups and organisations across the area, particularly so in light of the Covid pandemic.

This grant scheme has been created to enable communities to develop and deliver projects aimed at meeting the needs of their residents. Key to this will be the involvement of local elected members as one of the key contact points in local communities, who will work with and support local community groups to develop project ideas that meet identified need on a ward basis.

This guidance document has been produced using insight from the council's Consultation and Engagement Framework 2020-2025 and the LGA's 'Councillor workbook: neighbourhood and community engagement' as a handy tool for local councillors in their key role in supporting the facilitation of the Community Empowerment Fund.

Consultation and Engagement Framework 2020-2025

This key strategic document was endorsed by the council in February 2020 and states that:

"Through Team Caerphilly - Better Together, the council is committed to ensuring high quality, citizen focussed services for the communities that comprise our county borough. In future-proofing public services, we recognise the need to ensure effective engagement is central to our decision making - involving residents in the design of local services and the things that affect them.

In addition, we are focussing on further strengthening the relationship between the council and the community - residents, businesses, voluntary and community groups. Caerphilly county borough has a vibrant and engaged voluntary and community sector, which offers significant opportunity to maximise community participation".

The principles of engagement outlined in the document are that as a council:

- We will listen and understand
- Caerphilly county borough people will help inform and shape the decisions we make - and in turn we will keep people informed
- We will be inclusive and act with purpose
- We will make the most of what already exists in our communities
- Empower local residents to have greater influence over the issues that affect them

- Increase and strengthen the role of communities in how we live, work and visit Caerphilly county borough
- Help us to understand the needs of our communities which in turn, helps to ensure that the services we deliver meet those needs and that available resources are used effectively and in line with agreed priorities
- Ensure people are involved in the democratic process and enable communities to have greater input on issues that affect them
- Support communities to take action by helping them identify needs and support them in developing community-led solutions

How did the Community Empowerment Fund come about?

In the council's far-reaching resident survey 'The Caerphilly Conversation', carried out during December 2020 and January 2021, respondents told us that 78% of felt it was a positive suggestion to make a community budget available to residents, to enable them to do more things for themselves in future. 89% of respondents also agreed that offering incentives to communities would likely encourage them to take greater pride in their area.

In direct response to this feedback, in the council's budget setting for 2021/22, members approved a £328,000 annual funding allocation for a 'Community Empowerment Fund' to support community-led initiatives that complement and support those provided through public services. This allocation amounts to £4,490 per elected member per year.

What will the fund support communities to do?

The Community Empowerment Fund will enable communities to bid for funding in order to develop and delivery community-led initiatives that complement and support those provided through public services. Projects will aim to support communities to:

- Build community capacity
- Better understand and identify their local aspirations and priorities
- Make good use of existing assets, with the projects having the support of local communities
- Increase active inclusion and develop opportunities for enhanced engagement for groups that are more vulnerable and harder to reach
- Develop local assets, services and projects that respond to the needs of the people in their local communities
- Develop projects that are capable of becoming sustainable community projects
- Complement existing services in an area by providing additional activity

In calculating allocations, the £328,000 has been divided by 73 (the number of elected representatives within Caerphilly county borough), meaning an allocation of the equivalent of £4,490 per elected member. In wards where there are more than one elected member, the allocation is multiplied according to the number of ward councillors. For example – Penyrheol ward has four elected representatives;

therefore the Penyrheol ward would benefit from an allocation of £17,960 (£4,490 x 4).

What is my role in all this?

As elected representative, you have a significant role to play in the successful delivery of the Community Empowerment Fund across your communities.

Community groups will require your 'sponsorship' (support) for their project idea prior to their application for funding being submitted, with the project(s) in question needing to meet the criteria outlined above.

Bids for funding from the Community Empowerment Fund must have support in writing from you, their local elected ward councillor prior to submission, and members must consider any potential conflicts of interest before 'sponsoring' an organisation's project.

Having listened to feedback from residents on how the funding should be spent across communities, projects should also address one or more of the following:

- Environmental projects, including awareness of biodiversity and community projects
- Projects that support greater community cohesion
- Projects that aim to tackle isolation and loneliness across the community
- Digital inclusion projects
- Projects to encourage greater physical and mental wellbeing
- Activities for young people/educational activities
- Initiatives that promote and encourage community safety
- Supporting community groups to establish

Key to this will be the involvement of you as local elected members, as one of the key contact points in local communities, to work with and support local community groups to develop project ideas that meet identified need on a ward basis.

Elected members and community engagement:

The LGA's 'Councillor workbook: neighbourhood and community engagement' states that:

'Ward councillors, as democratically-elected leaders representing their communities have a unique role to play in enabling the local engagement which will drive strong, connected communities – what we refer to as 'community engagement'.

'Ward members are in the front line of neighbourhood and community engagement. As a community leader, you are best placed to understand the particular challenges faced by your constituents. And working with a wide range of individuals and organisations in the area, you can help them to decide how best to respond.

'It is only at a local level that problems such as access crime, environmental concerns and anti-social behaviour can be understood and addressed. Few other community leaders have the mandate to coordinate different interests, reconcile diverse views and encourage open debate and dialogue in the way that you can.

The particular strengths and knowledge that you bring to this engagement process are:

- An understanding of your ward – the demographics, the key issues facing local people and the way that services are being delivered
- The representation of local voices – you are a channel of communication between the communities you serve and the council, representing the views of others and speaking up for the 'hard to reach' or 'seldom heard'
- Communicating and influencing skills – you can help to ensure that the views of local people are taken into account when decisions are made by the council or outside bodies

How can I support the roll out of the Community Empowerment Fund?

The Local Government Association's useful 'Councillor workbook: neighbourhood and community engagement' gives lots of useful advice on how you as local elected representatives can encourage greater engagement with your communities.

The document can be found here: [11 26 LGA Cllr Workbook Neighbour hood engagement workbook December 2016.pdf \(local.gov.uk\)](#)

In addition, councillors will be invited to attend a series of online training opportunities on 'Community Involvement', 'Community Empowerment' and 'Coproduction' throughout the summer months. Please contact Hayley Lancaster at lancah@caerphilly.gov.uk for further details.