



CAERPHILLY HOMES TASK GROUP – 21ST MAY 2015

SUBJECT: COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT FUND

REPORT BY: INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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 Pen Y Dre Tenants and Residents Association.

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

- 4.1 The CHTG is asked to consider an application to the Community Improvement Fund by Pen Y Dre Tenants and Residents Association.
- 4.2 The Pen Y Dre Tenants and Residents Association are a constituted organisation with the aim of improving housing conditions, the environment and amenities within the ward of Twyn Carno. A copy of the constitution has been provided with the documents submitted.
- 4.3 The organisation consists of 10 consistent volunteers who have built excellent relationships with the local policing team, community support wardens, departments of Caerphilly Council, Flying Start and Communities First.
- 4.4 The Association are seeking funding from the Community Improvement Fund to help finance the cost associated with installing a play facility within the local community.
- 4.5 The total cost of the project is estimated to be £89,052.00 (VAT component £14,842.00).
- 4.6 Two quotes for the entire project have been submitted by the Association. A letter will be sent to the association requesting that they specify which products / materials of those listed will be funded by the Community Improvement Fund.
- 4.7 The Association have secured £4,500 from other sources and intend to submit an application for the majority of the costs involved to the Community Regeneration Fund and the Welsh Government's Community Facilities Programme (CFAP).
- 4.8 A total of £5,000 is requested by the Association from the Community Improvement Fund.

- 4.9 The Association have consulted with the local community and have enclosed letters of support from the Upper Rhymney Valley CF Cluster Board, Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations (GAVO), Caerphilly Youth Service and Councillor David Poole.
- 4.10 Letters of support from the CF Cluster Board and GAVO make reference to the fact that there are limited play facilities available to families and children within the local community. They suggest that the proposal submitted by the Pen Y Dre Tenants and Residents Association will provide a valuable community resource.
- 4.11 The Council have awarded planning permission (with conditions) to the Association to install a fixed and informal play facility. A copy of the permission has been provided as part of the grant application.
- 4.12 The Council have agreed to a 25 year lease for the land on which the play area is to be built to the Pen Y Dre Tenants and Residents Association (a copy of a letter confirming the lease (dated 6.2.2013 written on behalf of Colin Jones) has been provided as part of the documentary evidence submitted.
- 4.13 The Association has confirmed that the Council has agreed to finance the costs associated with any on-going maintenance of the area. However due to the pressure on the MTFP revenue costs can only be guaranteed for 2015/16 for maintenance. The Association will need contingency arrangements for further maintenance and will have to provide their own insurance cover.
- 4.14 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 play area provided as a result of the contribution from the Community Improvement Fund.

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 Pen Y Dre tenants and Residents Association are seeking a grant of £5,000.00 from the Community Improvement Fund.
- 6.4 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 Comments received have been incorporated in the report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 The proposal submitted by the Pen Y Dre Tenants and Residents Association is needed within this area of Rhymney and has the support of many local groups and organisations.

9.2 It is recommended that the CTHG support the application which will have a positive impact on tenants living within the adjacent housing areas subject to the following:

- Confirmation of what products / materials will be financed via the CIF.
- The award of additional funding from the CFP (WG Communities Facilities Programme) and the Community Regeneration Fund (approval letters to be provided).
- The Association is advised there is no guaranteed maintenance funding beyond 2015/16 and they should make contingency arrangements, including appropriate insurance cover.

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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