

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

21st NOVEMBER 2018

**RCT TOGETHER – REVIEW OF THE COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER
PROCESS**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH, PROTECTION &
COMMUNITY SERVICES IN DISCUSSIONS WITH COUNCILLOR R LEWIS,
CABINET MEMBER FOR STRONGER COMMUNITIES, WELL-BEING &
CULTURAL SERVICES**

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to propose a number of changes to the RCT Together process to align it with the Council's current strategic direction for community based services and assets.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- 2.1 Approve the proposed changes to the RCT Together process, establishing a more strategic approach aligned with the Council's Community Hub development programme.
- 2.2 Approve the proposed changes to the Community Enabling Fund, broadening eligibility criteria, allowing multiple applications and consolidating the Community Action Fund within the Community Enabling Fund.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The Council needs to revise its approach to RCT Together to better align the process and supporting arrangements with its current strategic priorities.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 At its meeting on 19th April 2018, the Cabinet approved a three year programme of investment in the development of between eight and ten Community Hubs across the County Borough.

- 4.2 These Hubs will bring together aligned services into a single location, thereby improving access and creating economies of scale. Each Hub will support a neighbourhood network of preventative community services and activities that will support people living in our communities to improve their independence, resilience, health and well-being.
- 4.3 Progress is being made with the successful community asset transfer of St Mair's Day Centre to Age Connect and the planned development of Mountain Ash Day Centre, the former Ferndale Infants School and Porth Plaza as Community Hubs.

RCT Together

- 4.4 RCT Together is the Council's innovative approach to engaging with its residents and communities to explore how they can work together to develop alternative delivery models that maintain services and facilities for the future. Launched in March 2015, RCT Together has seen the Council working with communities and partners to sustain and deliver service that the Council may no longer be able to deliver on its own. Expressions of interest are considered from non-profit voluntary or community groups for activities that are of benefit to our residents.
- 4.5 To date 144 formal expressions of interest have been received by the Council from a variety of groups with diverse proposals ranging from taking over libraries and paddling pools to museums and day care settings. 19 of these expressions of interest have successfully progressed to be completed community asset transfers. The RCT Together team works proactively with the voluntary sector to co-ordinate and provide support and guidance for interested groups looking to take over responsibility for local assets and services. This includes advice on business planning, legal considerations, funding, energy efficiency, training and other specialist advice.

5 DISCUSSION AND PROPOSALS

- 5.1 RCT Together has played an important and successful role since 2015 supporting a number of community groups and third sector organisations in the County Borough to secure accommodation and thereby enabling the development of their activities and services that benefit our residents.
- 5.2 Following the transfer of functional responsibility for RCT Together to Public Health, Protection & Community Services, the process has been reviewed and it is proposed to align the approach with the development of Community Hubs and their associated Neighbourhood Networks to ensure the process of community asset transfers delivers the Council's strategic and service requirements.

- 5.3 It is recommended that in future RCT Together should be refocused to ensure that only Community Asset Transfer applications that align strategically with and contribute towards the development of the Community Hub/Neighbourhood Network model and/or the Council's strategic priorities identified in the Corporate Plan "The Way Ahead" or Cwm Taf Well-being Plan will be progressed. These expressions of interest will need to demonstrate how they contribute to unmet need across the ten Community Zones identified by the Council.
- 5.4 To facilitate this approach a detailed report will be prepared for each of the ten Community Zones identifying potential sites for a Community Hub, the potential assets and providers in the area that will be part of the neighbourhood network supported by the Hub and providing a recommendation on RCT Together cases giving priority to childcare provision and developing sustainable transfer arrangements for community centres. Each report will identify all Council assets and services in each area (both active and surplus), and voluntary sector assets. The services provided from these assets will be mapped and the existing groups identified. This will enable gaps in provision to be identified along with social and regeneration opportunities in each area.
- 5.5 The gap analysis will focus on 5 priority thematic areas:
- Early Years
 - Employability
 - Youth
 - Learning Disability
 - 50 years plus
- 5.6 A report will then be compiled with strategic recommendations on what buildings and organisations are needed as a Community Hub; as part of the neighbourhood network and those that are surplus to requirements and can be disposed of.
- 5.7 Where the Council are looking to promote a targeted community asset transfer, it is recommended that the 30 day window of opportunity be retained but only expressions of interest would be sought with a clear expression of the Council's expectations for the use of the building/asset that meets the needs of the local community as identified by the revised RCT Together process.
- 5.8 It is anticipated that the revised process will ensure that any future tenancy agreements will include formal service level agreements (SLA) which clarify the responsibilities of the community group in contributing to the Neighbourhood Network. This approach will enhance the contribution that community asset transfers can make to the provision of community led services across the County Borough, strengthen the range of local provision and reduce time spent on speculative

applications, those with no credible business plan or those that do not meet the Council's strategic aims.

- 5.9 It is also proposed that the Council changes the arrangements for the Community Enabling Fund. This fund supports active proposals from non profit distributing voluntary and community groups or social enterprises who are seeking to develop projects that:
- Offer creative solutions on how local services could be run differently in partnership with or in collaboration with the Council or directly by them, or by members of their community;
 - Facilitate the transfer and development of community based assets; and
 - Sustain local services.
- 5.10 The fund is administered by the Regeneration, Planning and Housing Service and decisions on the award of funding are made by the Director Public Health, Protection & Community Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Stronger Communities, Well being and Cultural Services.
- 5.11 It is proposed that the fund be used to support priority cases that contribute to the Council's strategic priorities, with particular priority given to those applications that support the Community Hub model, transfer of Community Centres and the provision of childcare. It is also proposed that the eligibility criteria for the fund is broadened to include support to existing tenants. This would allow the fund to be used to support existing groups with long term leases who are struggling to sustain their tenancy due to a range of issues and need short term funding to ensure their sustainability.
- 5.12 It is proposed that the eligibility criteria be extended to include commercial childcare providers and Town and Community Councils. This would enable the Council to support the increased provision of professional child care across the County Borough. There is often a fine line between the profitability margins of commercial childcare providers and those that are set up as social enterprises and providing short term targeted financial support may enable a swift and sustainable asset transfer. Extending eligibility to include Town and Community Councils may support the transfer of assets such as Community Centres, particularly where the Town/Community Council may have been unable to raise the precept or attract grant funding to meet initial set up costs.
- 5.13 The fund will currently support a single application between £1,000 and £10,000 from an organisation. Some of the more well established and governed voluntary organisations are proposing to take on multiple asset transfers but are only able to access the fund once. It is proposed

that where there is evidence that the organisation can sustain multiple transfers that flexibility is allowed to extend the maximum grant limit or to allow multiple applications from the same organisation.

- 5.14 It is also recommended that the administration of the Community Action Fund is brought in house under the same arrangements as the Community Enabling Fund. This fund has historically been administered by Interlink on behalf of the Council and groups can apply for up to £500 to address a range of needs to help build community capacity. Although there is no live Community Action Fund in operation at present, it is recommended that if funding is allocated to this initiative in the future that it is merged with the Community Enabling Fund to create a single arrangement that will provide for a co-ordinated and graduated response to funding requests and ensure that allocated funding contributes to the Council's priorities.
- 5.15 The proposed changes to the Community Enabling Fund will extend its reach and allow greater flexibility for Officers administering the fund to accept applications from a range of organisations where their proposals contribute to the Council's strategic aims. Every application would be subject to a thorough assessment on its individual merits and the applying organisation to rigorous checks before any award of funding is recommended.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Equality Act 2010 introduced a general equality duty and a specific public sector equality duty that is applicable to Councils. Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (Public Sector Single Equality Duty) requires public authorities to demonstrate that they have paid 'due regard' in their decision-making process to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The relevant protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.

- 6.2 The Council must have due regard to the impact of any proposals on those with a protected characteristic. The Council has a specific duty to publish information to demonstrate how it has paid due regard to the aims above as part of its decision-making. Undertaking an Equality Impact Assessment screening exercise (and if necessary a full Equality Impact Assessment) would be evidence that the Council has

considered its legal obligations in making the decision on the recommendations in this report.

- 6.3 An equality impact assessment screening form has been completed relating to the proposed changes and has shown no adverse implications on those groups with protected characteristics as defined under the Equality Act 2010. Consequently a full equality impact assessment is not required.

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1 There are no consultation requirements arising from these proposals.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 8.1 The proposed changes to the RCT Together process have no financial implications for the Council.
- 8.2 The proposed changes to the Community Enabling Fund will consolidate any future Community Action Fund into the larger Community Enabling Fund but will have no additional financial implications overall.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 9.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

10. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

- 10.1 The development of Community Hubs contributes to the Council's corporate priorities through redesigning local services to ensure they are integrated and efficient. The Council is committed to working in a way that makes the best and most sustainable use of our limited and decreasing resources, always looking at alternative ways of doing things.
- 10.2 The implementation of RCT Together aims to achieve greater community collaboration and resilience. The Council will work with residents to increase self sufficiency, reduce reliance on statutory services and make the best possible use of community strengths to tailor services to need.
- 10.3 The Council's vision is to develop a new relationship with residents that enable them to be independent and resilient and to take on greater responsibility for their local communities. This is not about the Council shifting its responsibility – it is about recognising that residents want to be more involved in what happens in their community.

10.4 This proposal contributes to the well-being goals under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act. The proposals set out in this report offer the opportunity to provide a **long-term sustainable future** plan for the delivery of community services in RCT. Working in **collaboration** with communities and third sector organisations to explore community asset transfers creates the opportunity to address unsustainable service models and **integrate** service delivery for the benefit of residents. **Involving** the community throughout the process and developing services that meet the needs of our residents and help **prevent** the challenges many people are facing from escalating.

11. CONCLUSION

11.1 The proposed changes to the RCT Together will align the process with the Council's strategic objectives concerning community services and the development of Community Hubs. This will enable community groups to seek support from the Council but in a purposeful way that meets the needs of our communities.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

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Background Papers

Cabinet - [19th April 2018](#) (Developing Community Hubs in Rhondda Cynon Taf)

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