



With agreement of the Leader as Chair of the meeting and being of the opinion that the report of the Director, Public Health, Protection and Community Services be considered, in accordance with the provision of Section 100(b)4(B) of the Local Government Act, 1972, as a matter of urgency by reason of special circumstances i.e. the need to submit proposed priority project applications to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) by the 18th June for determination for funding under the UK Community Resilience Fund for full delivery by 31st March 2022.

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

17TH JUNE 2021

PROPOSED PRIORITY PROJECTS FOR THE UK COMMUNITY RENEWAL FUND

REPORT OF DIRECTOR – PUBLIC HEALTH, PROTECTION AND COMMUNITY SERVICES IN DISCUSSIONS WITH CLLR. RHYS LEWIS, CABINET MEMBER FOR STRONGER COMMUNITIES, WELL-BEING & CULTURAL SERVICES

Author: Judith Parry, Trading Standards & Registrar Service Manager/on behalf of Community Services

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek approval to submit proposed priority project applications to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) for determination for funding under the UK Community Resilience Fund for full delivery by 31st March 2022.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- 2.1 Consider the content of the report;
- 2.2 Review the priority projects, summarised at 4.6.1 – 4.6.8;
- 2.3 Approve the same, for submission to UK Government via MHCLG; and

- 2.4 Acknowledge that submitting an application does not infer that the project will receive funding from UK Government.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The UK Community Renewal Fund (CRF) aims to support people and communities most in need across the UK, creating opportunities for innovative ideas at local level. Rhondda Cynon Taf has been identified as in the top 100 Priority Areas for funding, and the Council itself as the Lead Authority for this priority area.
- 3.2 The CRF allows for applications to be submitted by the Local Authority, as well as external voluntary and community sector organisations and local education providers. It also allows for multi-area applications for funding.
- 3.3 The proposed projects have been identified through a rigorous assessment process; the investment priorities identified in the projects align with and complement all aspects of the council's Corporate Priorities and will be delivered, if approved, across the County Borough as a whole.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Following delivery of three Community on-line events, media messaging, and communicating widely with partners, community groups and town and community councils, on 7th May the Rhondda Cynon Taf application process for the UK Community Renewal Fund went live. Applications closed at 17:00 on 31st May 2021.
- 4.2 Twenty-six (26) applications were received, with a total value of £10,224,877.98. The applications covered the whole range of investment priorities, with the majority having strong interlinks with Corporate Plans and Priorities.
- 4.3 On 27th May, an urgent decision of the Leader of the Council approved the inclusion of Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC in a 10 local authority Cardiff Capital Region employability bid, led by Torfaen CBC. The RCT value of the project is **£161,846.00**, of a total bid of just under £2,000,000. Regional applications do not require consideration and approval at individual Lead Authority level, but the local contribution will be included within the maximum £3m available to RCTCBC.
- 4.4 Received applications were subject to an initial Administrative/Gateway check, which ensured key requirements were met, including completeness of application, project delivery within Rhondda Cynon Taf and project finalisation by the end of March 2022.

- 4.5 Remaining applications underwent a Stage 2 assessment over the two days of 7th and 8th June. Nine Senior Officers with cross cutting knowledge of the Local Authority priorities and/or specialist knowledge of identified sectors assessed applications using the MHCLG template. To maintain impartiality, none of the Officers had involvement with internal or external applications. At the end of the Stage 2 Assessment, six applications of higher priority (totalling £1,952,788.52), and three of a lower priority (totalling £1,768,466.34) were identified as suitable for referral to the Stage 3 process (Programme Recommendation Board).
- 4.6 On 11th June, the Programme Recommendation Board reviewed the higher priority project applications and placed these in order of preference for approval. Summaries of the recommended projects are detailed in 4.6.1 to 4.6.8.

4.6.1 Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council: RCT Together

Developing the Community Resilience Hubs, established during the pandemic and their Neighbourhood Networks, through activities that provide effective techniques and interventions to improve the resilience of individuals and communities and enable communities to build back better. Includes a community-based approach to adult social care provision. Freelance artists will engage with traditionally difficult to reach individuals.

Funding requested: £613,265.34

Investment Priorities: Skills, Local Businesses, Communities & Place

People supported: 102

Businesses supported: 26

Organisations supported: 92

4.6.2 Wales Co-operative Centre: Heal Your High Street

Create, manage and facilitate a co-working space / community hub and tourist information in Aberdare town centre, which will deliver a variety of innovative workshops, activities and events to business. Distribution of 10x £10,000 grants to local businesses to help support micro-economic stimulation and develop new products and services related to sustainable food and climate change.

Funding requested: £611,883.06

Investment Priorities: Skills, Local Businesses, Communities & Place, Supporting People into Employment

People supported: 310

Businesses supported: 305

Organisations supported: 36

4.6.3 Business In Focus: Focus Enterprise RCT

Supporting economically inactive / unemployed / furloughed individuals into self-employment. Investment in digital, employability and entrepreneurial skills, support newly established micro-businesses and supplement mainstream provision, working closely with community partners. The project supports financial literacy, working with Credit Unions. 50 established businesses will be supported with recover/resilience as they deal with COVID challenges.

Funding requested: £213,126.00

Investment Priorities: Local Businesses, Supporting People into Employment

People supported: 100

Businesses supported: 80

4.6.4 University of South Wales: Ideas to Innovation

Boosting entrepreneurial activity within RCT through a partnership with the Alacrity Foundation to support 20 entrepreneurs to create new products, services and processes to develop to commercialisation and create jobs and prosperity locally. Creation of an innovation hub as incubator for participant businesses and working with RCTCBC to identify suitable spaces within town centres.

Funding requested: £548,555.00

Investment Priorities: Skills, Local Businesses, Communities & Place, Supporting People into Employment

People supported: 20

Businesses supported: 20

Organisations supported: 20

4.6.5 Volunteering Matters: RCT360

A local partnership of specialist providers to increase opportunities for economically inactive/unemployed people, tackling barriers and addressing needs in a person-centred way. Collaborative working method to complement mainstream back-to-work provisions. Working with employers will engage staff with volunteering opportunities that support people with their employability. Exit strategy will ensure all participants are on suitable pathways.

Funding requested: £586,212.46

Investment Priorities: Skills, Local Businesses

People supported: 1,330

Businesses supported: 110

Organisations supported: 5

4.6.6 Engineering Education Scheme Wales Limited: Connecting Teachers with Industry

Events aimed at primary and secondary school teachers, exposing them to awareness of the range of innovative careers in Advanced Materials and Manufacturing, Creative and Digital, and Energy and Environment sectors (including cleaner energy sources). Collaboration with industry professionals and FE / HE partners. Potential opportunities under new Curriculum for Wales 2022 identified.

Funding requested: £88,136.00

Investment Priorities: Skills

People supported: 1,836

Organisations supported: 25

4.6.7 Wales Council for Deaf People: Improving Deaf Awareness and supporting people with hearing loss in the community

Delivery of Deaf Awareness training and basic British Sign Language to customer facing staff at range of businesses and organisations. Extend local community groups to relieve loneliness and isolation. New groups in sheltered homes, helping residents and relieving pressure on care home staff. Groups will be fully constituted, self-sufficient and sustainable after March 2022.

Funding requested: £66,300.00

Investment Priorities: Skills, Local Businesses, Communities & Place

People supported: 370

Businesses supported: 62

Organisations supported: 25

4.6.8 Llwynypia Boys & Girls Club: Reconnect Youth Project

Expansion of existing projects together with two new projects: working with YEPS to create an allotment, developing outdoor space and linking with sustainable food and healthy eating projects for children and parents; and working with Ysgol Nantgwyn pupils to plan and deliver youth sessions as part of the Welsh Baccalaureate.

Funding requested: £51,702.00

Investment Priority: Communities & Place

People supported: 250 - 350

Organisations supported: 1

4.7 Projects up to a value of £2.94m may be returned to UK Government for consideration, the remaining £60,000 being available to the authority for monitoring and evaluation costs.

- 4.8 The projects above summate to £2,779,179.86, with a 2% monitoring and evaluation fee of £55,583.60, bringing the total to £2,834,763.46. With the RCT contribution to the Regional bid added to this figure, this brings a grand total of **£2,996,609.46**.
- 4.9 Final approved project applications, together with a Lead Authority Bid Submission Summary document, shall be returned to MHCLG by midday on 18th June. The UK Government will communicate which applications shall receive funding under the CRF from the end of July.
- 4.10 Submitting a project application to the MHCLG does not infer that the project will receive funding from the UK Government.

5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 5.1 There is no requirement for an Equality Impact Assessment for the purposes of this report. However, it should be noted that the Community Renewal Fund Prospectus advises that all applicants should consider equalities impacts in formulating their bids and lead authorities are required to consider the equalities impacts of their decisions on proposals under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

6. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Documentation and application forms for the UK CRF were available in both Welsh and English. The Welsh Language Services Compliance Officer was involved in the Stage 2 Assessment to ensure that Welsh Language requirements are considered in line with relevant legislation.
- 6.2 Media and PR text, notes and social media hashtags are provided in both Welsh and English, for use by the successful project applicants and the Lead Authority.

7. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

- 7.1 No external consultation has taken place in respect of the project applications. The process for determining prioritisation has involved at Stage 2 panel members from the following service areas: Diversity & Inclusion, Performance Management, Finance, Regeneration, Welsh Language Compliance, Adult Education and Employment, Education and Training. The Programme Recommendation Board (Stage 3) has involved Elected Members, the Leader and CEO, and Group Directors.
- 7.2 Each person involved has been selected to ensure impartiality and that there is no conflict of interest in assessing project applications.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 8.1 As detailed in 4.8, the total value of applications proposed to be submitted to UK Government is £2,996,609.46, which includes a fee of £55,583.60 for monitoring and evaluation.
- 8.2 Each UK Government approved project must be governed by a funding agreement, determined by Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC as the Lead Authority.
- 8.3 Payment will be released to Lead Authorities in two tranches, the first on commencement, and the balance during Quarter 1 of 2022-23. It has been agreed that payments will be made to successful project applicants in arrears to reduce risk to the Council. Should any project be adversely impacted by this decision, exceptions may be considered on an individual basis, based on risk and delivery. In the event that outcomes identified in the project applications are not achieved, the UK Government will not pay the full amount awarded to the Lead Authority.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 9.1 No legislation has been considered in relation to this report. It should be noted that the bidding process itself must take account of the Lead Authority's legal obligations including the Public Sector Equality Duty.

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

- 10.1 The areas highlighted for investment are consistent with priorities highlighted in the Corporate Plan. Applicants are also directed to the Corporate Priorities in the completion of their application; where applicants had not addressed this, applications were not progressed. As part of the Assessment process (both Stage 2 and the Programme Recommendation Board), officers actively considered the strategic fit of applications to the Corporate Priorities and the Well-being of Future Generations Act.
- 10.2 The priority project applications detailed in paragraphs 4.6.1 – 4.6.8 address a broad range of the Corporate Priorities of People, Places and Prosperity; address Net Zero and wider environmental and well-being concerns.

11. CONCLUSION

- 11.1 On approval of the priority projects, the Programme Manager will prepare the Lead Authority return to UK Government, along with the relevant completed applications.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

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Background Papers – None

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