

AGENDA ITEM 4**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL****CABINET****26TH FEBRUARY 2015****RHONDDA CYNON TAF TRUST FUND FOR VISUALLY IMPAIRED PEOPLE****Report of the Group Director, Community & Children's Services****Authors: Luisa Bridgman, Head of Service Short Term Intervention,
Community Care - Tel No: 01443 425442****Yvonne Powell, Contracts Officer, Purchasing and
Commissioning Team - Tel No: 01443 425434****1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to inform the Trustees of the 'Rhondda Cynon Taf Trust Fund For Blind and Partially Sighted People in RCT' (the Trust Fund) about recent developments and to make recommendations for the future of the remaining Trust Fund monies following the expiry of the current contract with Cardiff Institute for the Blind t/a RNIB Cymru (CIB) in March 2015.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 A 3 year extension (subject to appropriate termination clauses) be negotiated to the existing contract with CIB (with an option for further annual extensions subject to funding being available, performance and appropriate termination clause) to be agreed.
- 2.2 The Council's Community Care Contracts Officer and Contract Monitoring Officer to continue to review and monitor the performance of the service on a regular basis.
- 2.3 CIB to receive the existing Trust Fund monies at the rate of £33,000 per annum for 3 years with any funds remaining thereafter to be paid annually at a rate to be approved by the Trustees in accordance with the mechanism referred to in 2.1 above.
- 2.4 That a progress report be prepared for the elected members of the Council's Cabinet Committee ('the Trustees') at the end of 2015 to confirm that the service continues to be delivered competently and in accordance with the principles and values which the Council stipulates

are fundamental to the support of visually impaired people residing in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

2.5 The Trust Fund to be wound up after all remaining monies are spent.

3. OPTIONS/ISSUES

3.1 It is considered that the above recommendations represent the best way forward to ensure that the remaining trust fund monies continue to be applied for the purposes of the Trust Fund (which are to benefit Visually Impaired people residing in Rhondda Cynon Taf). The Trustees are asked to note that the following options were also considered (but not selected):

- The remaining Trust Fund monies not allocated for trust purposes.
- Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council terminate the Contract with CIB and commission (via a tender process) a different user led organisation which is able to support and provide an holistic range of services for people with a visual impairment.

4. BACKGROUND

4.1 Three elected cabinet committee members are trustees of the Trust Fund. With the agreement of the Charities commission, Cabinet members (the Trustees) agreed on the 26th September 2011 that four trust funds with an unspent balance (for sixty years) be consolidated into a single trust fund and called the Rhondda Cynon Taf Fund for the Visually Impaired. The purpose of the Trust Fund is to benefit Visually Impaired people residing in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

4.2 Trustees agreed that in order to ensure that the fund was directed by users, a Steering Group (RCT County Steering Group) be set up. All members of this RCT (CSG) have a form of visual impairment, live within RCT and are nominated representatives from the County-wide visual impairment groups that are already in existence.

4.3 In April 2012, the Contract between the Trustees and CIB was entered into under the strategic guidance of the RCT (CSG) for three years (i.e. April 2012-March 2015). CIB were deemed the most suitably experienced, qualified and specialist voluntary organisation to deliver services for visually impaired people residing in Rhondda Cynon Taf. It was agreed to release £98,503 of the Trust Fund in order to commission CIB to provide the service.

- 4.4 The original aim of the commissioned service was for CIB, as well as delivering a range of appropriate services for visual impaired people within RCT, to work with the RCT CSG during the three years to establish a user-led independent charitable trust. It was intended, under this arrangement that the RCT CSG would after the three year contract with CIB had expired, receive and administer the remaining trust fund monies in order to continue to provide services for people with a sight loss within RCT.
- 4.5 At the Cabinet meeting held on 18th November 2013 the Trustees noted the RCT CSG decision not to become a constituted trust.

5. CURRENT POSITION

- 5.1 Since the Trustees last met in November 2013 CIB continues to facilitate the delivery of a range of appropriate services in order to help those people identified as having a visual impairment to maintain or regain their independence (although it now has no remit to assist RCT CSG in forming a constituted trust given the decision referred to in 4.5 above).
- 5.2 These services include: (this list is not exhaustive)
- Operating a contact telephone line to support people who are blind or partially sighted across RCT. Currently there are 490 RCT citizens on their contact list.
 - Supporting the delivery of 'finding your feet' courses to groups in partnership with the Council, providing blind and partially sighted people with the opportunity to explore barriers to getting out and about and advice about shopping, transport and managing money.
 - Facilitating support groups for people who are blind or partially sighted across RCT.
 - Recognising the CSG as a voice for those people with sight loss living in the community of RCT.
 - Home visiting and befriending
 - Providing information and advice on relevant local and national services; particularly social services and specialist services such as RNIB's digital inclusion and Eye Clinic Liaison Officer (ECLO) service.
- 5.3 The contractual arrangements with CIB comes to an end March 2015.
- 5.4 Corporate Finance have confirmed that, as of 31st March 2015 the monies remaining in the Trust Fund amount to approximately £170k. The funds are a combination of "internally invested" funds and external investments.
- 5.5 The Trustees note that the purpose of the Trust Funds remains for the benefit of Visually Impaired People residing in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

- 5.6 The Trustees note that the services currently provided by CIB are complementary to those statutory services provided by RCT and that they support people with a visual impairment
- 5.7 The Trustees note that the decision made by Cabinet on 26th September 2011 where upon it was agreed that after 3 years, the remaining trust funds would be transferred to a newly formed user led Charitable Trust is no longer an option for the remaining funds.(as explained in 4.5 above)
- 5.8 The Trustees note that there may be a variety of national providers who could, variously, provide the services that CIB are currently providing. However, it is felt that contracting with a variety of providers will dilute the impact of the funds and attract a disproportionate element of management charges.
- 5.9 CIB has an impressive record of fund raising from a variety of sources. During the last three years the organisation has attracted external funding from a number of sources (People and Places bid, Community Voice and ICF Funding) to enhance the services currently provided within RCT.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 It is proposed the Contract be extended for a three year period based on existing contractual arrangements where upon the same financial commitment will apply (i.e. £99,000 from 1st April 2015-31st March 2018.) After this period any remaining funds will be allocated on a yearly basis as it is envisaged that there may be sufficient funds available for an additional 2 years.
- 6.2 The Contracts Officer for Community Care will notify CIB of the Trustees' decision and will arrange for the appropriate contractual documentations to be issued.