



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

RHONDDA CYNON TAF CHARITY FOR THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED CABINET COMMITTEE

19TH DECEMBER 2018

RHONDDA CYNON TAF TRUST FUND FOR VISUALLY IMPAIRED PEOPLE

REPORT OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES IN DISCUSSION WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, COUNCILLOR GERAINT HOPKINS

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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The Board of Trustees of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Trust Fund for the Visually Impaired (the 'Trust Fund') comprises three Cabinet members. This report seeks to update the Trustees regarding the services currently provided by Cardiff Institute for the Blind (t/a RNIB Cymru) to citizens within Rhondda Cynon Taf, which are funded from the Trust Fund, whose reserves are now diminished.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That the Trust Fund approve the release of the remaining CCLA (Church Charities and Local Authorities) investments in order that these funds can be used to support the existing service for (approximately) an additional year 2019-2020;

2.2 That the Council's Finance (Treasury Management Department), which manages the Trust Fund on a day to day basis, be instructed to release the remaining funds in accordance with 2.1 above;

2.3 Subject to 2.1 above, to note that due to the limited funds available the Trust Fund would thereafter be 'wound up' during the period January-March 2020;

2.4 Trustees are requested to note that once the Trust Fund has been 'wound up' there will be no Cardiff Institute for the Blind (t/a RNIB Cymru) office base (currently in Courthouse Street Pontypridd) within the Rhondda Cynon Taf area; and

- 2.5 Trustees are requested to note that whilst the 'New Places, New Experiences' project funded by the Big Lottery Fund and delivered by an RNIB co-ordinator, will still provide a service to people within Rhondda Cynon Taf, this service is different to that which is being delivered by the Trust Fund monies.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Since April 2012 Cardiff Institute for the Blind (CIB) t/a RNIB Cymru have been providing services to visually impaired people in RCT at an annual cost of £33,000.
- 3.2 At a meeting between CIB and the Trustees on the 28th February 2017, an update was provided on the success of a new initiative funded by Big Lottery Fund. This is a project to engage with visually impaired clients in RCT and Merthyr which encourages participation into mainstream community leisure sport and interest activities.

4. OPTION/ISSUES

- 4.1 At a meeting in October 2018 between Senior Officers of the Council and the Director of Operations for CIB, CIB confirmed that, once the Trust Fund is no longer available, they do not have alternative funding to continue the current service that they are providing within Rhondda Cynon Taff.
- 4.2. CIB did confirm at the meeting that, as part of their contingency plan, they would explore the option of continuing the RCT Contact line service by providing a volunteer staff member, this person to be based within their Cardiff branch. Further confirmation will need to be sought to confirm whether or not this option remains deliverable.
- 4.3 CIB confirmed that the community social groups that CIB assist in supporting (i.e. Cynon Valley Vision, Pontypridd Group, the Mountain Ash Group and the SIDS group) could become self-running.
- 4.4 The Trust Fund monies support the running of CIB accommodation costs within Pontypridd. They have confirmed that without continued funding they will not be able to remain within Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- 4.5 There has been no confirmation that CIB will be able to help in providing a percentage of monies to help support the continued provision of the services in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

5. CURRENT POSITION

- 5.1 Services provided through the Trust Fund to visually impaired people in Rhondda Cynon Taf continue to be delivered competently. These include;

- The contact lines continue to operate to support people who are blind or partially. During 2017-2018 377 RCT citizens were on the CIB contact list, 64% of the clients on the contact list were successfully contacted. Continued attempts were made to communicate with the remaining 35% via house calls.
 - CIB continues to facilitate and support social groups in Aberdare, Mountain Ash, Pontypridd, Rhydfelin for people who are blind or partially sighted.
 - CIB continues to address any issues resulting from home visits and to provide emotional support to service users. During 17-18 a total of 65 home visits were undertaken.
 - CIB continues to work in partnership with RNIB (in order to signpost individuals to the organisations Counselling and welfare rights services), the Council's sensory impairment service and the Cwm Taf UHB eye clinic liaison officer.
 - CIB continues to signpost individuals to relevant agencies and accept referrals for services from the Council's sensory and rehabilitation Team.
 - CIB continues to raise awareness of the services it provides by attending and facilitating promotional events. During 17-18 they visited Treorchy and Tonyrefail comprehensive schools, attended the Trivallis open day and facilitated a sensory loss event in order to provide visual impaired awareness to children and adults in RCT. **(this list is not exhaustive)**
 - CIB continue to provide information and advice about the services they provide via a quarterly newsletter, telephone, website, Facebook and Twitter.
- 5.2 The Big Lottery funded project New Places, New Experiences project delivered in Cardiff, the Vale, Swansea, Neath Port Talbot, RCT and Merthyr commenced in RCT and Merthyr in May 2017.
- 5.3 The 'New Places, New Experiences' project engages with and influences the delivery of local sports, leisure and interest services resulting in enhanced, more accessible community services that meet the needs of people with sight loss. It aims to give blind and partially sighted people the knowledge, skills and confidence to try and then continue participating in leisure, sport and interest activities.
- 5.4 The project continues to work with existing mainstream sports and leisure organisations and in close partnership with the local authority to make use of the expertise of local sports development officers, leisure and community services.

6. NEXT STEPS

- 6.1 Whilst Trust Fund monies continue to be available, Senior Officers of the Council will work collaboratively with the Director of Operations for CIB to continue exploring options to sustain the current service that they provide for visually impaired people in RCT.
- 6.2 It is proposed that the Trust Fund releases the remaining CCLA (Church Charities and Local Authorities) investments in order that these funds can be used to support the service for (approximately) one additional year 2019-2020 and the Council's Finance (Treasury Management Department) which manages the Trust Fund on a day to day basis, be instructed to release the remaining funds.
- 6.3 If such funds were released for this purpose then due to the limited funds subsequently available the Trust Fund would be 'wound up' during the period January - March 2020. A trust is wound up (brought to an end) when all of the trust's assets are distributed to the beneficiaries or to another trust.
- 6.4 If the Trust Fund is 'wound up' there would be no Cardiff Institute for the Blind (t/a RNIB Cymru) office base (currently in Courthouse Street Pontypridd) within the Rhondda Cynon Taf area.
- 6.5 Whilst the 'New Places, New Experiences' project funded by the Big Lottery Fund and delivered by an RNIB co-ordinator, will still provide a service to people within Rhondda Cynon Taf, this service is different to that which is being delivered by the Trust Fund monies.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 An Equality impact assessment has not been undertaken at this time as no change to service is proposed.

8. CONSULTATION

- 8.1 As part of the ongoing monitoring of the service contract CIB have provided evidence that they have undertaken consultation on user satisfaction with service users. This evidence has been reviewed as part of the monitoring arrangement by officers of the Council.
- 8.2 Additionally the Council's Monitoring Officer has sought feedback from the Council's Sensory Services Team.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 9.1 Please refer to point 2.2 above.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

10.1 Any provision of services commissioned from CIB is considered in accordance with the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 (the "Act"). Local Authorities have a general duty under the Act to promote wellbeing. This duty applies when considering decisions in respect of an individual but also when considering broader strategic issues that do not relate to an individual. In doing so, the overall purpose is to produce a **sustainable and diverse range of care and support services to deliver better**, innovative and cost-effective services and support and promote the wellbeing of every person, and carer.

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

11.1 This report supports the [Council's corporate priorities](#), namely:

- People - promoting independence and positive lives for everyone

12. CONCLUSION

12.1 The report seeks to outline the services currently provided by Cardiff Institute for the Blind (t/a RNIB Cymru) to citizens within Rhondda Cynon Taf in order for Trustees to establish a way forward.