

AGENDA ITEM 8**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL****CABINET****15th DECEMBER 2015****'RCT TOGETHER' COMMUNITY ACTION FUND****REPORT OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR, CORPORATE & FRONTLINE SERVICES IN
DISCUSSION WITH THE DEPUTY LEADER, CLLR K MONTAGUE.**

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1. This report provides Cabinet with information on the potential for the introduction of a small grant scheme for volunteers and community members ('RCT Together Community Action Fund'), to be hosted by the County Voluntary Council, Interlink RCT.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:

- Endorse the approach set out in respect of the RCT Together 'Community Action Fund', subject to officers agreeing more detailed criteria with Interlink RCT.
- Agree to the introduction of the grant during the 2015/16 financial year.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 The need for a small grant aimed at community members and volunteers, who may not be part of wider constituted groups, has been recognised by the Council as a way of helping people to take small actions that benefit their local area.

4. BACKGROUND

4.1. Under the Council's proactive approach of alternative service delivery - 'RCT Together' - it has been recognised that some volunteers and members of the community require a small amount of money to undertake basic tasks associated with developing and maintaining their community assets.

4.2. It has been proposed by the Deputy Leader that a small grant (the 'Community Action Fund') is made available for volunteers to either:

- a) undertake small scale community activity e.g. painting a room in a community building; or
- b) reward volunteers in kind e.g. transport hire for a trip.

- 4.3. The fund will be a total of £10K, funded through set aside available resources. If the Cabinet approves the creation of the fund, immediate action will be taken to ensure the fund is in place as soon as possible and community and voluntary organisations informed of how they can apply for funds.
- 4.4. Individuals / groups will be able to bid for £50-£500 at a time, once per financial year.
- 4.5. Initial discussions have taken place with the relevant stakeholders on the budget allocation and amount of grant available to volunteers. Due to the small scale nature of the grant and the administrative processes required, it is proposed that Interlink RCT host the Community Action Fund and more detail is included at Section 7 of the report.

5. **PROPOSED FUND CRITERIA & APPLICATION PROCESS**

- 5.1. The Fund will be branded as the "RCT Together' Community Action Fund" and advertised through the organisations of the Voluntary Sector Liaison Steering Group and to relevant local partners.
- 5.2. It is proposed that more detailed criteria and conditions of the Community Action Fund are drawn up by Council officers and Interlink RCT as part of the legal agreement to host the Fund.
- 5.3. In brief, the Community Action Fund will be open to any volunteers or community members that wish to undertake small scale community activity or reward fellow volunteers. For capital works, applicants will need to state the ownership / status of the asset and who holds responsibility for its maintenance.
- 5.4. Applicants do not need to be constituted to be eligible for the funding. It will be the responsibility of Interlink RCT to check that the information provided in the application with regards to the group being constituted (or not) is correct.
- 5.5. Volunteers and community members can apply for the fund once every financial year. It will be the responsibility of Interlink RCT to determine whether individuals / groups are attempting to repeatedly apply for the fund and whether funding to complete the activity or reward volunteers has been applied for elsewhere.
- 5.6. For applications up to £250, criteria for the funding will be community related activity.
- 5.7. For applications of £251-£500, the applicants will need to demonstrate a longer term effect of their spend i.e. items or expenditure that has more than a 'one-off' usage.
- 5.8. Individuals / groups will be invited to apply for the Community Action Fund through writing an e-mail, letter to Interlink RCT or through Interlink RCT's website. A short template will be provided for applicants to outline their reasons for applying and state whether they are already linked to an asset or service transfer (in order to make appropriate links to the wider 'RCT Together' agenda).
- 5.9. Interlink RCT will be responsible for ensuring the individual or group applicant is competent to carry out the activity proposed e.g. are appropriate insurance policies in place; does the group have a safeguarding adults and children procedures in place?

5.10. Interlink RCT will assist and advise groups of cost effective materials e.g. furniture from 'Too Good Too Waste'; floor tiling from 'Greenstream'; paint from recycled usage, such as 'Community Re-paint'. Other forms of reward scheme should also be taken into account, such as 'time-banking', and recommended to certain applicants.

Applications for the Fund can range from £50-£500 and costings for materials, hiring vehicles etc. should be provided within the application.

5.11. Interlink will have the responsibility for approving applications.

6. **MONITORING**

6.1. It is proposed that Interlink RCT make the appropriate checks with other officers involved in the 'RCT Together' approach before approving the fund to avoid double-funding activity.

6.2. Receipts for all expenditure will be required by Interlink.

6.3. Criteria of the fund will stipulate that any application up to £250 will be required to simply promote the fund, take photographs to evidence how the grant was used, such as "before" and "after" photographs, and inform the Local Ward Member that they have successfully secured the funding.

6.4. For applications of £251-£500, applicants will need to write a short report with photographs (e.g. "before" and "after" photographs) and / or video evidence of how the money was used and the long-term impact of the funding. They will also inform the Local Ward Member that they have successfully secured the funding.

6.5. Interlink will underwrite the funding, if:

- receipts are not received from an individual or group by the end of the financial year, funding will shift to Interlink funding, to avoid audit trail issues.
- there is an individual or group that may be found to lead to concerns for any reason (e.g. safeguarding, political activity, fraud etc.), Interlink will shift them over to be funded from Interlink reserves / funding.

6.6. Some basic performance indicators will be put in place as part of the legal agreement with Interlink RCT, to ensure that good work is being captured for the wider 'RCT Together' approach.

6.7. Interlink RCT will be required to provide a monthly update to the Voluntary Sector Liaison Steering Group on applications awarded.

7. **COMMUNITY ACTION FUND - HOSTING ARRANGEMENTS**

7.1. The Council has requested that Interlink RCT (the County Voluntary Council) host the fund on its behalf. The rationale for this hosting arrangement is the increased flexibility, monitoring and speed at which payments can be made by a voluntary sector organisation to another body, compared to possible delays in administration through a larger public sector body.

7.2. Interlink RCT also have the relevant experience of such funding - the organisation already operates a Development Fund totalling £5K, with a maximum application of

£500. Although this fund is for the growth and development of small community groups (akin to the Council's Community Enabling Fund), the application and approval processes could be adopted for this 'Community Action Fund'. (The criteria for the current 2015/16 Development Fund is attached at Appendix I; the Chief Executive of Interlink RCT has expressed that this funding will be amended to better reflect the availability of the Community Action Fund.)

7.3. The Chief Executive of Interlink RCT has agreed in principle to host, administer and monitor the fund on behalf of the Council. In practice, this will require a legal agreement with Interlink RCT, setting out the terms agreed between both parties (the Council and Interlink RCT) and their roles in the scheme. The Service Level Agreement between the Council and Interlink RCT for 2016/17 is currently being drafted and this will be included, if approval to establish the fund is given. Similarly, if approved, an individual SLA, purely for the fund, will need to be drafted for the rest of 2015/16.

7.4. Interlink RCT have confirmed that they will keep the Council updated with complementary Interlink funding for audit purposes and for evidence of value added. This is also to avoid any double-funding of projects.

8. **EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

8.1. An Equality Impact Assessment is not required for this decision, as it applies to the general population i.e. anyone will have access to the fund.

9. **CONSULTATION**

9.1. The Council has no legal duties to consult on this decision, but partner organisations have been consulted and agree to the approach.

10. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

10.1. The fund will be a total of £10K, funded through available resources.

11. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

11.1. Advice has been sought from Legal Services and the Local Authority is able to establish such a fund with reference to :

- *Section 111 Local Government Act 1972 - provides that a local authority shall have power to do any thing (whether or not involving the expenditure, borrowing or lending of money or the acquisition or disposal of any property or rights) which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of their functions*
- *Section 2 Local Government Act 2000 - provides that every local authority in Wales have the power to do anything which they consider is likely to achieve any one or more of the following objects - (a) the promotion or improvement of the economic well-being of their area, (b) the promotion or improvement of the social well-being of their area, and (c) the promotion or improvement of the environmental well-being of their area. This power allows the Council to (a) incur expenditure, (b) give financial assistance to any person, (c) enter into*

arrangements or agreements with any person, (d) co-operate with, or facilitate or co-ordinate the activities of, any person, (e) exercise on behalf of any person any functions of that person, and (f) provide staff, goods, services or accommodation to any person.

12. LINKS TO THE COUNCILS CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/ SIP.

- 12.1 The 'RCT Together' approach is key initiative of this Council and has strong links with Medium Term Service Planning and wider Single Integrated Plan priorities.

13. CONCLUSION

- 13.1 The need for a small grant aimed at community members and volunteers, who may not be part of wider constituted groups, has been recognised by the Council as a way of helping people to take small actions that benefit their local area. The establishment of the 'RCT Together Community Action Fund' will assist communities in taking forward small scale initiatives.
- 13.2 It is recommended that Cabinet endorse the approach and agree to the establishment of the fund as soon as possible.

Other information:

- ***Scrutiny:*** *Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee.*
- ***Background papers:*** *The criteria and description of the current Interlink RCT 'Development Fund' is attached at Appendix I for reference (to be revised if the Community Action Fund is approved by Cabinet).*
- ***Contact officer:*** *For further information, please contact Heledd Morgan - 01443 680 527.*

Appendix I**INTERLINK DEVELOPMENT FUND****CRITERIA AND DESCRIPTION OF FUND**

Interlink Development Fund is available to any member community or voluntary group in Rhondda Cynon Taff to support them to recruit new members, involve more people from the community and help to develop your group.

Who can apply?

Small community and voluntary groups in Rhondda Cynon Taff who are members of Interlink. Only one application can be submitted per financial year.

How can I become a member?

Community and voluntary groups in Rhondda Cynon Taff can apply to be a member at any time, just call 01443 846200 or visit our website www.interlinkrct.org.uk.

What will the scheme fund?

The funds main aim is to support smaller community groups in Rhondda Cynon Taff to grow and develop. The funds main aim is to support groups to recruit new members, and get more people from the community involved in what you do.

Grants may be awarded for capital or revenue up to a maximum of £500.

Examples of possible projects include promoting what you do, holding an event to encourage people to join your group and volunteer expenses.

How can I apply?

You can get support from a member of Interlink's staff by calling 01443 846200 if you need help to complete the application. (This does not guarantee that your application will be successful). An electronic form is available on our web-site www.interlinkrct.org.uk or by emailing adavies@interlinkrct.org.uk

Applications can be submitted at any time, these can be either a hard copy or an electronic copy.

How will my application be assessed?

1. Will the project help your group to encourage new members and involve more people from the community?
2. Is the applicant a small, local voluntary or community group?
3. Is the project value for money?
4. Is there a clear timescale for the project and use of the funding?
5. Are the benefits of the project clear?
6. Is the group a member of Interlink?

What are the terms and conditions of the grants?

If your application is successful, you will be offered a grant subject to accepting the conditions in the offer letter.

- You will have to nominate authorised signatories before the grant can be claimed.
- You will need to provide Interlink with copies of receipts
- We may visit you to monitor the progress or success of your project.

When will I know the outcome of my application?

We will turn around your application as quickly as possible. For more information call 01443 846200.

If you are unsuccessful, we will explain our decision to you in writing.