

## **AGENDA ITEM 7**

### **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

#### **CABINET**

**19<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2016**

#### **RCT TOGETHER PROCESS – UPDATE ON PROCESS**

#### **REPORT OF THE SECRETARY TO THE CABINET IN DISCUSSIONS WITH CLLR K MONTAGUE.**

**AUTHOR(S):** Emma Wilkins, Cabinet Business Officer.

#### **1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 This report provides Members with details of proposed new processes to be taken forward with the RCT Together 'Expressions of Interest' and 'Community Enabling Fund' applications, to ensure that the process remains fit for purpose.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- 2.1 Endorse the proposed way forward as outlined in section 5 of the report.

#### **3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 The need to progress the Expressions of Interest received in an efficient and timely manner to allow timely publication of the EOIs to ensure that we maximise the opportunities for other organisations to submit their own proposals, which could enable complementary and collaborative approaches in maximising use of Council Assets.
- 3.2 The need to determine the award of the Community Enabling Fund in an efficient and timely manner.

#### **4. BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 The Council's RCT Together Approach for progressing Community Asset Transfers was agreed by Cabinet at its meeting on the 30<sup>th</sup> October, 2014.
- 4.2 To date over 91 Expressions of Interest have been received from a variety of existing and newly established community and voluntary groups with proposals ranging from taking over a small paddling pool to taking on the partial leasehold of a Leisure Centre. The Asset transfer of the Muni Arts Centre has recently been recognised by the Welsh Government as a way of Good practice and was referred to in its recently published document 'Community Asset transfers in Wales' Best Practice Guide"
- 4.3 At the Council meeting on the 25<sup>th</sup> March, 2015 it was also agreed that a Community Enabling Fund of £0.100M be created to support communities to come together and actively participate in delivering of services.
- 4.4 Applications would be considered from non profit distributing voluntary and community groups or companies for activities, services and facilities which benefit residents within Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- 4.5 Applications to the funding could be between £1,000 to £10,000 although applications outside of these values would be considered in exceptional circumstances
- 4.6 Currently Expressions of Interest and Community Enabling Fund applications are reported to Cabinet for a formal decision, following progression from the Voluntary Sector Liaison Steering Group.
- 4.7 It has been noted that due to timescales with reporting the Expressions of Interest and the Fund applications to cabinet, delays in the process have been recognised, which may cause problems to community groups taking forward their projects.
- 4.8 Working collaboratively with RCT Officers from the Community Asset and Service Transfer Panel and members of the Voluntary Sector Liaison Steering Group consideration has already been given to looking to refine the current Community Asset Transfer processes, to ensure that the arrangements in place remain 'fit for purpose', and in line with good practice and guidance obtained from the Welsh Government, and other local authority areas.
- 4.9 It is suggested that the current process applied in respect of the awarding of the Community Enabling Fund should also be reviewed.

## **5 RCT TOGETHER PROCESS GOING FORWARD**

- 5.1 Officers working within the RCT Together process have already identified that streamlining the current process cycle would assist both officers and community groups / organisations in achieving each of their desired outcomes, and officers are now taking forward the transfer of premises to Community or third party organisations through the Council's Concessionary Letting process.
- 5.2 Adoption of this approach has not only streamlined the process for interested parties but has also allowed council officers to target resources where it is of most benefit.
- 5.3 It is proposed that to further streamline the process and to allow the Voluntary Sector Liaison Steering Group to work in a more strategic rather than operational framework, EOIs (not taken forward through the Concessionary letting process) and Community Enabling Fund Application will be dealt with under the Councils Delegated Decisions framework, to allow decisions to be taken in a more efficient and timely manner, rather than being reported to Cabinet.
- 5.4 The proposed way forward will still allow engagement from the members of the Voluntary Sector Liaison Steering Group in respect of the applications but will help to speed up the process for the groups and individuals taking forward their interest within their desired timescales.
- 5.5 Having a more efficient process in places in respect of 'time management' will be especially important for Expressions of Interest which need to be promoted through the 'Window of Opportunity', that is currently in place. Here all RCT Together Expressions of Interest proposals for Community Asset and Service Transfers that have received agreement to progress to the Business Plan stage are promoted for a 30 day period to allow other Community and Voluntary Organisations a fair and equitable opportunity to submit their own proposals, which could enable complementary and collaborative approaches in maximising use of Council Assets.
- 5.6 In respect of High Level Expressions of Interest of Asset and Service Transfers, these will be reported to Cabinet, if officers and the appropriate cabinet member feel this is appropriate.

## **6 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is not needed at this time, as the report is only seeking endorsement to take forward a change to the current decision making process.

## **7 CONSULTATION**

- 7.1 Discussions have been taken forward by the Voluntary Sector Liaison Steering Group in December regarding the need to streamline processes for the benefit of the Community groups and organisations coming forward.

## **8 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

- 8.1 There are no financial implications aligned to this report

## **9 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

- 9.1 There are no legal implications aligned to this report.

## **10 LINKS TO THE COUNCILS CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/ SIP.**

- 10.1 Making Best use of the Budget - RCT Together is the Council's forward-thinking approach to engaging with its residents and communities about how they can work together to explore alternative delivery models, which could maintain services and facilities in the future. This means making best use of Council buildings and encouraging working in partnership with others, where this will be of benefit. '

## **11 CONCLUSION**

- 11.1 The success of 'RCT Together ' since its launch in March 2015 is evident within the Communities across the County Borough with individuals, community groups and organisations taking forward initiatives to ensure continued delivery of an asset or service delivery in their community, with valuable support provided to such groups from the Council and the third sector.
- 11.2 To assist the groups further the processes identified in section 5 of this report will further assist the individuals and groups to take forward their initiatives, through a more streamlined and efficient decision making process.

### **Other Information:-**

#### ***Relevant Scrutiny Committee***

Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity.

**Contact Officer:** D Hanney Community Asset Development Officer