

## **The Vale of Glamorgan Council**

### **Cabinet Meeting: 25 July, 2016**

## **Report of the Cabinet Member for Housing, Social Care and Health**

### **Community Investment Strategy**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To agree a Strategy to underpin the Community Investment work ongoing within the Housing section.

#### **Recommendation**

1. That Cabinet note the contents of the report and agree the new Community Investment Strategy as attached at [Appendix A](#).

#### **Reason for the Recommendation**

1. To provide a framework to inform the community investment and involvement priorities across the Vale. As well as directing work plans, this Strategy will determine priorities for investment decisions.

#### **Background**

2. There is a strong and well established case for community investment. Expectations are increasing for communities to take on roles in service design and delivery, planning and budgets for their local neighbourhoods. Accounting for differing and minority voices in the process is a challenge for diverse and rapidly changing communities.
3. The Localism Act and greater community control has seen local people dealing directly with statutory authorities, developers and others to negotiate financial benefits and management or ownership of assets. At the same time, reduced spending in the public sector brings dangers that deprived communities will decline further, while prosperous communities may tip into deprivation or experience widening inequalities. This often leads to tension and unrest. Community development can address issues of power and inequality, and can help competing community voices to be heard. It can also create communities that are more resilient to stress, preventing tensions from spilling into unrest.
4. As well as a social and moral justification, there is also a strong business case for Community Investment. In its simplest terms, the Council wants to protect its assets

i.e. the homes and the estates where the homes are located. There has been a strong track record of investment in the fabric of the buildings and the Wales Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) programme has resulted in the investment of tens of millions of pounds. This investment needs to be supported by an investment in the social infrastructure and the tenants themselves, in order for our estates to remain sustainable in the future and be attractive places where people are proud to live.

5. In recognition of this case, an increase in the amount of tenant involvement and community development work was identified as a key priority during a recent restructure of the Housing team. As a consequence, two specialist Community Investment and Involvement Officer Posts were created within the staff team. The two posts were also supported by a dedicated annual budget of £50,000 to be used to facilitate project work and improvements.
6. Since the staff have been appointed into the new roles, there has been a sharp increase in community investment activity. Relationships have been established with a wide range of active tenants, community groups, partner agencies and other sections of the Council. These relationships are key to coordinating activity, avoiding duplication and working together to address issues which cross departmental boundaries.
7. There has also been an increase in project activity. Already, a range of different projects have been developed including: environmental improvements at sheltered housing schemes, digital inclusion initiatives for hard to reach tenants, community clean-ups and sports based sessions for young people living in more deprived areas. In addition, a number of grant applications have been submitted to lever in external funding to support the improvements, these include the creation of digital hubs at sheltered complexes in the rural Vale and the improvement of a large area of open land in the centre of Gibbonsdown in Barry.
8. To support this work and ensure that resources are directed where they are needed most, a comprehensive review has recently been completed. This has taken into account a broad range of socio economic data in the Vale, looking at employment trends, health statistics, the Vale citizens' survey results and feedback from various events. There has also been a conversation with the tenants working group, which has helped identify tenants concerns and priorities. The final element of the review has involved checking best practise in other housing organisations, particularly those with an established track record of community investment work.

## **Relevant Issues and Options**

9. The review has flushed out four priority themes in need of attention. These include: increasing employability; improving health and well-being; strengthening communities; and promoting financial and digital inclusion.
10. These four priority themes form the basis of the Community Investment Strategy and will result in a range of initiatives and projects designed to make improvements to residents' quality of life. The case studies within the Strategy give some examples of the different initiatives, whilst the Operational Delivery Plan at the rear of the document sets out more specific details regarding each of the actions designed to achieve the strategic aims.

## **Monitoring and evaluation**

11. Progress with implementing the Strategy will be measured via the completion of individual actions contained within the Operational Delivery Plan towards the back of

the document. There will also be periodic reports to the Homes and Safe Communities Group regarding the range of projects and initiatives taking place.

12. The number of tenants taking part in activities and projects will also be recorded and reported as part of standard key performance indicator reporting which takes place within the Directorate.
13. It may be possible to convert the various project outcomes into monetary values in order to quantify the social value of the investment.

### **Resource Implications (Financial and Employment)**

14. The HRA Business Plan 2016 identifies an annual budget of £50,000 to support the delivery of Community Investment priorities identified within the Strategy. This is in addition to the funding of two specialist Community Investment and Involvement Officer Posts which form part of the Housing team staff establishment.
15. The HRA funding will be used to lever in additional funding from grants and other agencies to support the achievement of our Strategic aims.

### **Sustainability and Climate Change Implications**

16. Improving the environment is a key theme within the Strategy and will be supported by a range of actions designed to improve the quality of open spaces and utilise them for community benefit.

### **Legal Implications (to Include Human Rights Implications)**

17. There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

### **Crime and Disorder Implications**

18. There are no direct crime and disorder implications arising from this report, though it is well established that strong cohesive communities can have a positive impact on crime reduction.

### **Equal Opportunities Implications (to include Welsh Language issues)**

19. There are no equal opportunity implications.

### **Corporate/Service Objectives**

20. This Strategy is consistent with the overarching vision within the new Corporate Plan, namely 'Strong Communities with a Bright Future' as well as several of the Well Being Outcomes, including 'An inclusive and Safe Vale', 'An Environmentally Responsible and Prosperous Vale', 'An Active and Healthy Vale'.
21. It is also consistent with many of the core objectives (which support the Well Being outcomes), including: encouraging and promoting healthy and active lifestyles; reducing poverty and social exclusion and providing decent homes and safe communities.

### **Policy Framework and Budget**

22. This is a matter for Executive decision.

## **Consultation (including Ward Member Consultation)**

23. This report will affect all council tenants and therefore no individual ward member consultation has been undertaken.

## **Relevant Scrutiny Committee**

24. Homes and Safe Communities.

## **Background Papers**

None.

## **Contact Officer**

Nick Jones - Housing & Strategic Projects Team Leader.

## **Officers Consulted**

Colin Davies, Manager, Barry Communities First Cluster Team  
Helen Moses, Strategy and Partnership Manager, Performance & Development Services  
Legal - Committee Reports  
Accountant - Housing

## **Responsible Officer:**

Miles Punter - Director of Environment and Housing Services