

The Vale of Glamorgan Council

Cabinet Meeting: 23 October, 2017

Report of the Cabinet Member for Housing and Building Services

Vale Timebanking Pilot Project (Community Investment - Housing)

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide Cabinet with an overview of Timebanking and how such a scheme could benefit residents within the Vale of Glamorgan and to seek approval to establish a pilot Timebanking project.

Recommendations

1. That Cabinet agrees to the introduction of a pilot Timebanking project within the Vale of Glamorgan.
2. That the Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee receives six monthly monitoring reports in relation to the operational delivery of the Vale Timebanking project.
3. That a full evaluation report be produced for Cabinet evidencing the difference the scheme has made after 12 months.

Reasons for the Recommendations

1. To provide authority to introduce a pilot Timebanking scheme.
2. To allow the outcomes of the pilot scheme to be assessed along with other performance management data for Housing Management.
3. To assess whether Timebanking has had the desired impact and offers value for money in order to inform a decision on introducing such a scheme on a permanent basis.

Background

2. The Community Investment Team alongside the wider Housing Management Service has been looking at methods to increase our tenant's involvement in volunteering. There is a strong commitment to building safe and cohesive communities and a belief that there are many people living within our properties who would be able to assist us in achieving this. This could include supporting neighbours, helping to maintain

garden areas, providing befriending services or helping run a local sports project. With over 4,000 properties owned by the Vale of Glamorgan Council, many in areas of high deprivation, increasing volunteering in this sector could result in benefits to the wider community.

3. Traditionally, there have always been excellent volunteering opportunities within the Vale and volunteering services in this area are well administered by the Glamorgan Voluntary Service (GVS). However it appears that very low levels of Vale housing tenants have tended to engage with these services. It is apparent, through our community investment work, that many of those who engage with our housing support services are currently unemployed, with many falling into the category of long-term unemployed. It is therefore recognised that if we want to increase volunteering as a way of assisting in tackling many of the underlying issues we need to take a different approach. One way to do this is to incentivise volunteering.
4. Timebanks are successful in attracting people who would not normally become involved in traditional volunteering. Based on figures gathered in 2002 only 16% of volunteers have an income under £10,000 whereas nearly 4 times as many (58%) Timebank participants do. Nearly double the number of Timebank participants are not in formal employment (72%) compared to traditional volunteers (40%), therefore this model could be successful in encouraging our tenants to volunteer.

Relevant Issues and Options

5. Timebanking has been established in the U.K. since 1998 and has witnessed an extraordinary growth in recent years. Although Timebanking is well established it is still constantly evolving to best meet the needs of the local communities involved in such projects. There are around 300 Timebanking schemes currently in operation throughout the U.K. Timebanking is a way of "banking" volunteering hours to then have them repaid in some way.
6. For every hour participants 'deposit' in a Timebank through volunteering, they are then able to 'withdraw' equivalent support themselves. There are several models for Timebanking. The option that would appear to best meet the needs of our tenants is based on reward schemes. Rather than volunteers 'withdrawing' an hour of another volunteer's time, they are able to claim a time credit voucher. Credits can then be redeemed in various places throughout the U.K. including cinemas, leisure centres and sporting events. Activities 'cost' different amounts of credits, therefore the number of hours collected through volunteering will determine the activities accessed.
7. Timebanking brings many benefits including making use of assets and resources within a community or group; building social networks for people; encouraging people to work together; and gaining new skills. Equality is key to the ethos of Timebanking based on the principle of an hour for an hour; this reflects that everyone's time is equally as valuable and recognised in the same way. Volunteering can support some of the most marginalised people in society and can provide them with a sense of self-worth and belonging.
8. There have been a number of projects run throughout the U.K. which have specifically looked at the benefits of Timebanking models to support individuals who are homeless or vulnerably housed, including the Broadway Skills Exchange. This project enabled participants to access training, develop new skills, gain work experience and meet new people. Timebanking was originally developed in America with the aim of supporting older people who may be struggling to maintain their home

or are becoming isolated. As the Vale has an ageing population, especially within some of the more rural areas, the scheme would bring additional support to help this group of residents through providing support with maintenance and befriending, for example. Timebanking projects have shown that they can be used to tackle social exclusion through building economic, social and cultural capital for people and their communities.

9. Through community investment projects we strive to empower tenants to build brighter futures for themselves and their families. In many of the neighbourhoods we manage there are high levels of unemployment, for example in Cadoxton 5% of the population is in receipt of JSA or Universal Credit compared to a Vale average of just under 2%. Again in Coldbrook around 8% of young people (aged 18 - 24) are in receipt of JSA or Universal credit compared to the Vale average of 2.5%, which is again higher than the national average which is below 1%. This scheme will encourage residents to gain new skills, become involved in their local community whilst moving closer to the employment market.
10. Housing Services has worked in partnership with other areas of the local authority as well as external organisations, such as Reach and Newydd Housing Association, to develop a steering group to support the pilot project. The group has been created as a consequence of a combined desire to support people into volunteering. We purpose that Housing Services will take the lead on the project costing £14,918 for the initial pilot year. The steering group will then work together to develop a sustainable funding model for the scheme if it is successful. Initial discussions have focused on partners making a contribution towards the annual fee relevant to turnover, similar to models for membership subscriptions.
11. In order to pilot Timebanking within the Vale an organisation called Spice would be used to manage the introduction of the scheme. Spice was founded in South Wales as a social enterprise which developed a unique time-based currency referred to as credits. They work with a range of organisations including housing and community services. Spice has found that the credit model had increased community cohesion, raised levels of volunteering and improved health. So far throughout the U.K. 35,000 people have earned credits and 500,000 credits have been issued.
12. Spice currently charge a fee of £14,918.00 which includes purchasing £5,000 credits, staff expertise, promotional activities and monitoring services. Spice work with local businesses to create additional places where credits can be redeemed and monitor where volunteers are using credits. They will also translate the credits used into a monetary value to reflect the benefits it has given volunteers. Internal mechanisms will be established to measure the number of volunteers and volunteering hours that are created as part of the scheme.
13. The project aims to achieve the following within year 1 -
 - 5% of tenants or members of their households to be actively engaged in volunteering
 - The Community Investment Team will have established 3 innovative Timebanking projects to benefit the local community, including within rural areas
 - 70% of those who engage in Timebanking will report gaining new skills
 - 60% of those who engage in Timebanking will report increased self-esteem
 - 70 young people will complete a volunteering activity via Timebanking
 - Tenants and residents report feeling valued for their contributions to the community

- Greater ability to deliver effective services with the resources available.
14. Within year 1 a clear framework will be established detailing Timebanking activities and organisations that are permitted to issue credits, ensuring transparent processes are in place.
 15. Should there be low levels of engagement with the project it would cease after the first year. We are not required to enter into any on-going contracts with Spice therefore after the initial cost should the project end there would be no further costs.
 16. Timebanking offers potential to increase levels of volunteering, participation and engagement amongst Council Tenants. It is a creative way of incentivising people to take an interest in their communities. The benefits are well documented, including volunteers reporting increased confidence, skills and self-esteem. There is a cost associated with the project and a need to further develop an effective working relationship with Spice; however, the potential benefits are significant and can make a big difference to individuals and communities.

Resource Implications (Financial and Employment)

17. The proposed cost of the project is £14,918.00 per year and will be met from existing budget within the housing revenue account. The value of credits issued will be capped and no additional costs will be incurred where credits are used at various outlets. The project cost includes:
 - Senior Project Manager and Partnership Manager - who will work with the Community Investment Team to set-up Timebanking scheme within the Vale and support with on-going management of the scheme. Spice staff will spend time working with local businesses and providers of services in order to create more opportunities for volunteers to redeem credits, including local and independent business. This includes the monitoring and evaluation of the Vale scheme.
 - Design and Printing of bespoke time credits currency.
 - Spend Brochures - these are created for individual regions and detail all of the locations where credits can be redeemed.
 - 2 x Events to promote the launch of Timebanking.
 - Spice will provide the Community Investment Team and steering group with training around the use of the scheme to ensure we get value for money.

Sustainability and Climate Change Implications

18. Increased voluntary working will help to improve the local environment. It could also increase personal training and development, particularly important for residents who are long term unemployed. This could improve future employment prospects. Health and well-being could also be improved by providing residents with incentives to increase their physical activity. Socialising opportunities could also be improved which would provide increased support to our tenants, particularly those who may currently be lonely or vulnerable.

Legal Implications (to Include Human Rights Implications)

19. The Council will not consider itself liable in respect of any losses or claims in respect of activities linked to the Timebanking project. This position will be made clear in the service level agreement with Spice and any associated paperwork relating to the project.

20. In respect of insurance, Officers will liaise with the Council's Insurance Officer to ensure that participating organisations have sufficient public liability insurance cover in place.
21. In respect of Safeguarding, where volunteering is used, organisations involved will comply with the Council's Safeguarding procedure. This will include DBS checks as appropriate. If commissioning or contracting takes place, requirements will be incorporated into the relevant service level agreements.

Crime and Disorder Implications

22. There are no direct crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

Equal Opportunities Implications (to include Welsh Language issues)

23. Timebanking will be available to all Vale of Glamorgan tenants who wish to become involved in volunteering. There will be arrange of opportunities that will enable people of all ages and abilities to be involved.

Corporate/Service Objectives

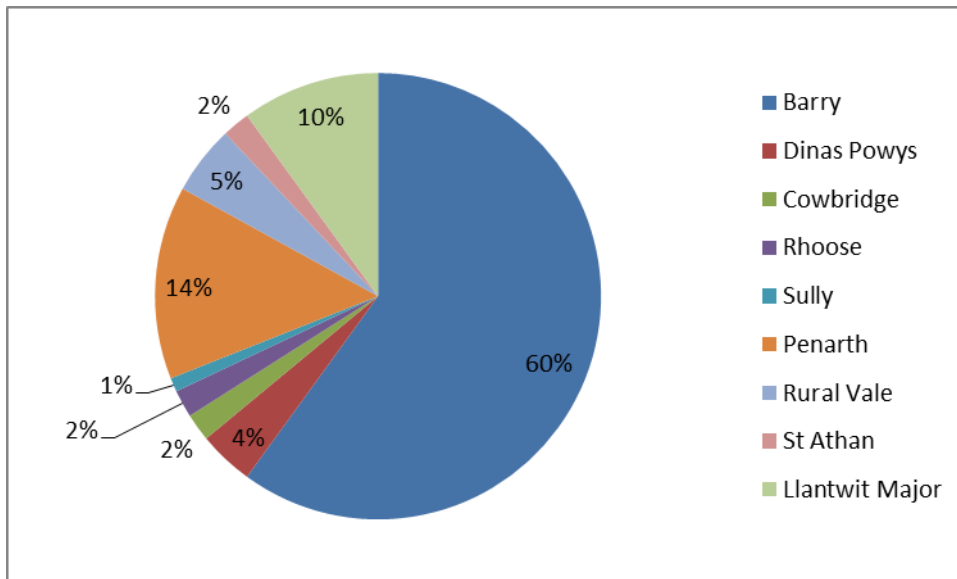
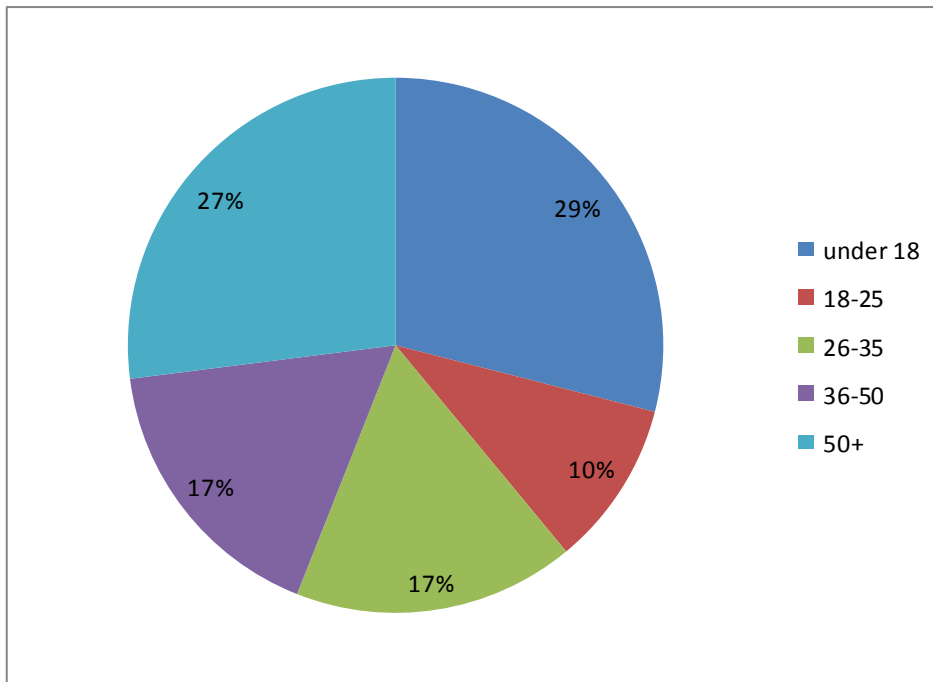
24. Developing a Timebanking scheme within the Vale will support us in achieving a number of our key objectives including our well-being outcomes of an inclusive and safe Vale and an environmentally responsible and prosperous Vale.
25. Through volunteering and support, tenants will gain new skills enabling them to access employment or increase confidence encouraging them to engage in training or development courses. In turn this should help reduce the number of household living in poverty. Credits will enable people to access social activities which those living within low income families may otherwise have been unable to afford.
26. By encouraging those who have not previously volunteered to join Timebanking schemes we hope to reduce social exclusion and encourage people to become more involved in their local communities. There are a number of opportunities within neighbourhoods for volunteers to become involved in which could help strengthen bonds and relationships between neighbours and communities.
27. Through volunteering we intend to bring communities together. The project will also focus on encouraging young people to become involved in positive activities. We believe that this will help build a sense of community and tackle anti-social behaviour within neighbourhoods resulting in safer communities.

Policy Framework and Budget

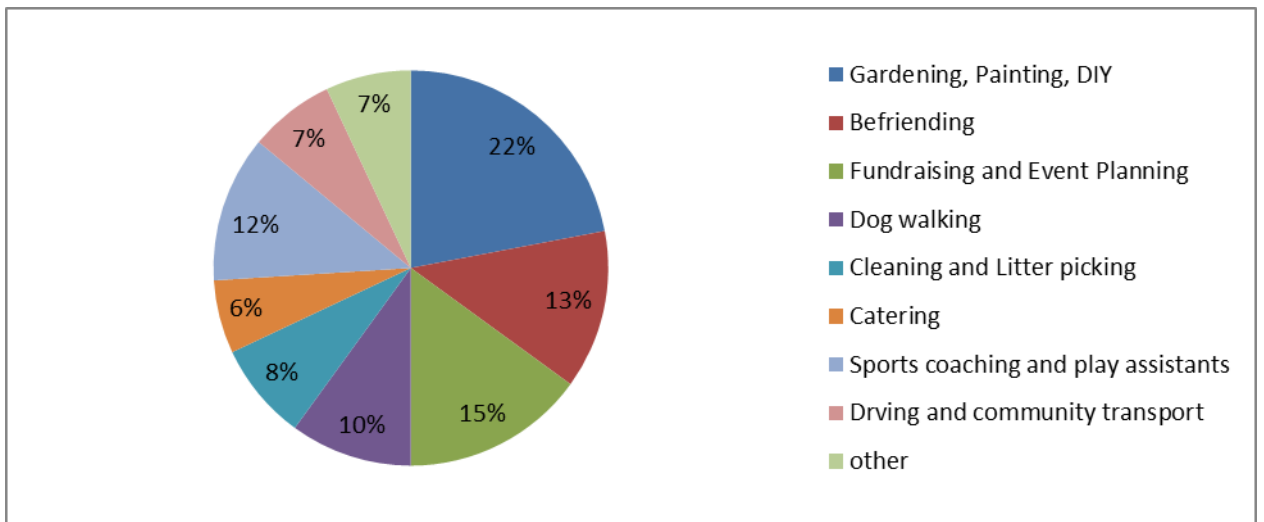
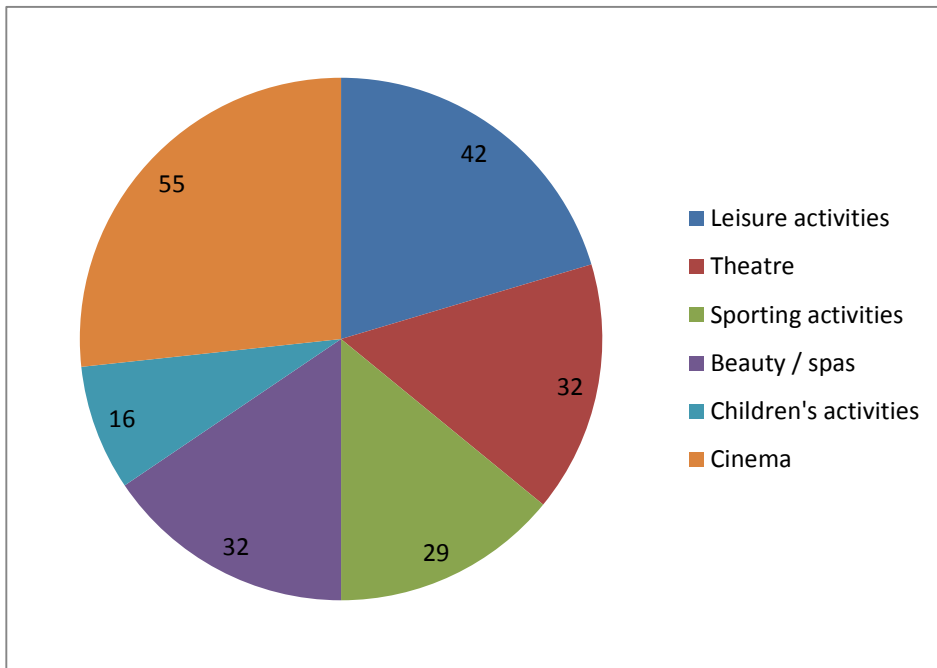
28. This is a matter for Executive decision by Cabinet.

Consultation (including Ward Member Consultation)

29. We have recently consulted with a number of tenants and the wider public to establish interest in Timebanking. 108 individuals actively engaged in the consultation, this was made up of people living throughout the Vale and a range of ages, although the majority of those interested in the project reside in Barry.



30. We found that all those who engaged in the consultations felt that Timebanking would be a really good way of encouraging volunteering as well as rewarding those who choose to freely give up their time. Residents also suggested that the credits could be used to help low income families access activities they might not be able to access otherwise as well as being used to purchase items such as school uniforms which some families struggle to be able to afford. The consultation indicated the types of activities residents would be willing to volunteer for and how they would like to redeem credits and this is detailed in the charts that follow.



31. In summary those asked were interested in volunteering in activities such as supporting others, community gardening, household DIY, and community work. The majority would redeem credits through trips to the cinema, sports sessions and children activities.

Relevant Scrutiny Committee

32. Homes and Safe Communities.

Background Papers

None

Contact Officer

Mark Ellis - Community Investment and Involvement Officer

Officers Consulted

Nick Jones - Housing and Strategic Projects Team Leader, Visible Services and Housing Support

Victoria Brown - Senior Neighbourhood Manager (Community Investment and services to older people), Housing Services

Mike Ingram - Operational Manager Public Housing Services, Director's Office - Visible Services and Housing

Committee Reports - Legal

Carolyn Michael - Operational Manager Finance

Responsible Officer:

Miles Punter - Director of Environment and Housing Services