

Meeting of:	Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee
Date of Meeting:	Wednesday, 16 October 2019
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Homes and Safe Communities
Report Title:	Community Investment- update
Purpose of Report:	To update the Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee on progress implementing the actions identified in the Community Investment Strategy.
Report Owner:	Nick Jones - Housing and Strategic Projects Team Leader
Responsible Officer:	Miles Punter - Director of Environment and Housing Services
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	This report will affect all Council tenants and therefore no individual ward member consultation has been undertaken. The report has been reviewed by Officers from the Legal and Finance teams.
Policy Framework:	This report is a matter for information and noting
<p>Executive Summary: The report highlights the progress in delivering the Community Investment Strategy. The Strategy was approved back in July 2016 and was the start of a comprehensive and varied programme of projects and initiatives designed to build strong communities and improve tenants' quality of life.</p> <p>All of the actions in the Community Investment Strategy have been completed and they have delivered a range of positive outcomes. Notable results include assisting tenants into work, helping tenants and their families to become more active/healthy and promoting 'active' communities through volunteering (via the Time banking project).</p> <p>Options to continue to develop and expand Community Investment activities have been considered including the scope to invest further in these activities to support a greater number of projects; however the emphasis needs to remain on sustainability- ensuring that projects continue to run if staff cease to provide support or if funding comes to an end. Whilst there is a convincing business case for pump priming new initiatives to get them off the ground, there are limited benefits derived from continuing to fund some things indefinitely, especially when there is no scope to make activities sustainable or resident led. The best outcome is that tenants are empowered to be able to take over projects themselves and ensure they evolve to meet the needs of the respective communities. It is this rationale, which underpins decisions made to support specific projects.</p>	

Recommendations

1. That the Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee note the monitoring report in relation to the Community Investment Strategy.

Reasons for Recommendations

1. To ensure that the Community Investment Strategy is implemented effectively and key outcomes are achieved.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Community Investment Strategy was approved by Cabinet on 25th July 2016 (Minute C3263 refers). It represented an innovative approach to improving tenants' quality of life and in building sustainable communities. Research has indicated there are significant benefits to be derived for individuals and communities as a result of Community Investment activities. These include increasing confidence, self-esteem and skills of individuals and at a community level, promoting better community spirit and creating more successful/ resilient communities.
- 1.2 Two dedicated Community Investment Officers are employed to lead on Community Investment work and they are led by a Senior Neighbourhood Manager with specific expertise in CI. In addition there are four Neighbourhood Managers responsible for distinct neighbourhoods who work jointly with CI staff to set up new projects and to support tenants after CI workers have moved on to new initiatives.
- 1.3 A significant amount of funding has been set aside to support CI work, totalling £53,000 per annum. This can increase through Community Benefit clauses linked to Council contracts. For example, contractors carrying out improvement work are obligated to provide 'community spend' monies; additionally, private developers are required to make financial contributions to support existing communities. Typically this can be spent on things such as: improving community buildings, environmental clean ups or one off events e.g. employment boot camps, school holiday activities etc.
- 1.4 Community Investment work can also be supported by grant funding, such as the Council's own Stronger Communities Grant or via external funders e.g. Rural Communities Development Fund. This additional funding can be used to support additional CI projects.
- 1.5 Progress updates have previously been provided to the Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee in May 2018 and January 2019.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1** The Community investment Strategy has provided a very effective framework for developing closer links with tenants and communities and driving forward a range of initiatives designed to improve tenants' lives and build stronger neighbourhoods. The majority of actions identified in the Strategy have been completed and have made a considerable impact. The following examples provide a flavour of some of the projects that have taken place and highlight the number of tenants who have benefitted.

Employability

- 2.2** Within the Strategy, there was been a big focus on employability, in terms of equipping tenants with the confidence and skills they need to get into employment. Working in partnership with a range of agencies and developing the Opportunities Knocks Training Programme in partnership with Newydd Housing Association and Inspire to Work (I2W) it has been possible to deliver targeted training, support and work experience opportunities to help individuals get job ready. The programme has been very popular and extremely successful with over 50 courses being delivered and over 400 clients benefitting from these opportunities. Additionally through the programme, 14 individuals have been helped to secure work experience with 3 of these being offered permanent employment in a range of sectors including construction, retail, and customer service.

Case Study

- 2.3** A young lady living in a Council property approached the CI officer interested in completing some training courses. The tenant who had two young children was suffering from low self-esteem after being in an abusive relationship.
- 2.4** Together they set out some targets / milestones they both felt were appropriate and achievable. Initially the tenant completed some confidence building and wellbeing sessions and a referral was made via Atal-Y-Fro for her to engage on a programme for her to understand what a healthy relationship is. Within this programme she learnt coping mechanisms and how to put in place healthy parameters for both herself and her children.
- 2.5** Over a period of a couple of months her confidence grew and she was able to take part in a number of training sessions aimed at enabling her to start part time work when her youngest child started full time education. Additionally, she completed a number of weeks work experience within the Housing Department. Lastly, she attended the Vale's Business Start Up sessions as she had an interest in becoming self-employed by writing children's books. To this end she was

enrolled onto a Creative Writing Course which was sourced for free via Adult Education.

- 2.6** Over the summer period she concentrated on her writing and sent a short story to a number of publishers. Not expecting a response, she was amazed to receive an offer to publish it and a request for her to write two more. This is an amazing achievement for this young lady as she has worked so hard to overcome all of her difficulties.
- 2.7** An important element of the employability work has been the creation of work opportunities linked to Council contracts. A great example has been the new Council housebuilding programme, where the contractors have been required to create apprenticeships in a variety of trades as well as paid work experience and volunteering opportunities. Tenants have been prioritised for these so that additional community benefits are being created in the areas where homes are being built. Other opportunities are being created through the Council house improvement works, with tenants being able to secure training and work opportunities; and also via community benefit sums, which are being set aside to carry out improvement works in local areas.
- 2.8** One such project was to purchase a new POD for St Luke's Avenue in Penarth. Historically the POD was based in an old container which was being rented from a company. This POD (container) was not really suitable for the residents group to utilise as it had no bathroom facilities or area to make teas and coffees.
- 2.9** CI approached the Council's Section 106 Officer in Planning to try to secure s106 community monies to purchase a new container that had kitchen and toilet facilities. They were successful and a new POD has been purchased and is in the process of being set up to an electricity and water supply. Going forward the CI officer will be working closely with the local residents group and the local youths and community to design a mural for the POD and landscaping around it to make it more appealing than the previous structure. Additionally they will be looking at delivering some bespoke training which will be tenant led from the POD such as Digital Training sessions and other sessions.
- 2.10** A variation of the approach is also being adopted through the 21st Century School Improvement Programme. Whilst not being delivered by the Community Investment team, significant community benefits have been secured via the contractors which will benefit local people.
- 2.11** As well as creating work and training opportunities through partners, it has been possible to create apprenticeships and work experience opportunities within the Council itself. These include seasonal work placements within the Parks team, several apprenticeships in the repairs teams and office based apprentices within the Housing Management team.

Improving Health and Well-being

- 2.12** Another key element of the Community Investment Strategy was to promote healthy living. A range of activities and projects have been run involving sport and exercise. These include the very popular 'Kicks' community football programme, run in conjunction with Cardiff City Foundation, over 90 young people benefit from weekly football coaching. Initially run at Colcot Sports Centre in Barry, the programme has recently started in Llantwit Major. As well as fitness, team work and confidence building, the scheme provides a focus for young people and helps reduce neighbourhood nuisance.
- 2.13** For younger children, the Community Investment team has delivered a series of Bike Clubs. The sessions run in Treharne in Barry and also in St Athan. These have enabled children to learn to cycle, road safety and the basics of bike maintenance. These have been very popular with children and parents alike with over 100 people taking part. It is hoped that this will encourage children and their parents to be physically active.
- 2.14** Adults have not been forgotten and events and activities have taken place. One of the more popular has been a Couch to 5k running programme, where individuals with no jogging or running experience have taken part in twice weekly sessions to build fitness culminating in several people taking part in the recent Barry 10k run.
- 2.15** Environmental projects have also played an important role in bringing people together and in improving neighbourhoods. A range of successful schemes have been set up including the establishment of a community garden in Treharne and community gardening groups in Gibbonsdown and Llantwit Major. These groups have ensured that estates are kept litter free and in good condition and carried out garden maintenance work for older or more vulnerable tenants.
- 2.16** Funding has been set aside and preparatory work has started an open space at Margaret Avenue, Barry. A once derelict space, prone to fly tipping is being transformed into a community open space which can be used by local people. The area features raised beds, a secure storage facility, an educational area with picnic tables and children's play equipment. The scheme has been developed in partnership with local residents as well as Colcot Primary school, who will use the space for outdoor learning.

Active Communities

- 2.17** The last theme in the Community Investment Strategy was promoting active communities. The Time banking scheme was an important vehicle for delivering this objective and has been very effective with over 40 new tenants signing up since April 2019 and volunteering over 520 hours of their own time by taking part in befriending, peer support and organising community events.

- 2.18** Whilst the current projects and activities will continue, a review of the Community Investment Strategy will be carried out over the next 12 months to ensure that it remains effective and targeted at the right areas. The review will take account of feedback and best practise in the field.

Case Study

- 2.19** Flying Start recently linked with the Community Investment team to join the Vale Time banking scheme. This project gave local dads an opportunity to volunteer and earn Time Credits for their families.
- 2.20** The 'Men Behaving Dadly' group have been attending Flying Start and have completed a number of courses. The dads previously helped at fun days and events but this new volunteering opportunity has given them an opportunity to earn time credits and expand their skills.
- 2.21** The dads were asked if they would like to earn Time Credits and volunteer to do regular garden clearing work at Flying Start's main office. They were really keen and agreed to sign up as time banking members.
- 2.22** Due to ill health the dads are unable to work and attending 'Dad's Base' they have made new friends whilst also giving something back to the community.
- 2.23** Members from the Dad's group said "We enjoy coming to Dad's Base and since we have been volunteering and earning Time Credits it has had a big impact on family life where we've had the opportunity to take our children to new places".
- 2.24** Flying Start Parent Support Worker Damion Knott has been coordinating the project and said "the Timebanking scheme is a great way of encouraging people like our Dad's group to get involved in volunteering. We've had great fun with this project and on top of that they've earned time credits – amazing. The group are now going to continue with projects at our Family centre on Gladstone Road".

3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?

Long term

- 3.1** The approach being taken to Community Investment maximises the chances of the project continuing to be viable in the long term and ensures that Council tenants and members of the public can continue to take advantage of a wide range of projects and initiatives which improve their quality of life.

Prevention

- 3.2** The approach to Community Investment helps to improve individual's well-being, enabling them to be more confident, develop better self-esteem and feel more valued. This can lead to health benefits and also has acted as a springboard for some individuals who have gone onto to access training or employment. Community Investment work has also improved community spirit and led to some people taking a more active role in their communities- this helps ensure that Council estates are great places to live.

Integration

- 3.3** Whilst Community Investment initiatives have been developed within the Housing team, the aim has always been to empower residents and communities to take over the responsibility for running the projects, therefore enabling the staff to focus on new projects.

Collaboration

- 3.4** The key to success of the CI projects so far has been the partnership approach taken. The staff team have worked closely with a wide range of partners who have been able to encourage people to volunteer and also offer volunteering opportunities. This has increased the number of people who have taken part and provided a varied range of opportunities, including environmental works, healthy living initiatives, community events etc.

Involvement

- 3.5** Tenants have been involved in Community Investment work from the beginning. Prior to introducing the project, consultation is carried out with individual tenants and soundings taken from tenant groups. This shaped the approach taken. Close links have been formed with the individuals involved and staff continue to provide support, encouragement and assistance to help people derive the maximum benefit.

4. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 4.1** Community Investment work is supported via internal and external funding. As well as the employment costs relating to three directly employed staff, there is an annual revenue funding of £53,000 made available to support initiatives which deliver against the priorities identified in the CI Strategy.

- 4.2** The CI team have secured a range of external funding to support CI activities. This includes £32,000 Rural Communities Development Fund; contractor donations and community benefit monies via section 106 Planning obligations placed on property developers.

Employment

- 4.3** There are no direct employment implications arising from this report.

Legal (Including Equalities)

- 4.4** There are no direct legal implications arising from this report save for the general equalities implications as detailed below. The range of CI projects are designed to ensure that all tenants have an opportunity to get involved in various initiatives. This includes specific projects which have been developed to involve young people, vulnerable people and person's whose health restricts their day to day activities.

Public Sector Equality Duty

- 4.5** The public sector equality duty (see section 149 of the Equality Act) came into force in April 2011. Public authorities like the Council are required, in carrying out their functions, to have due regard to the equality needs set out under s.149 of the Equality Act 2010 to:

- Eliminate discrimination (both direct and indirect), harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010.
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- The Council must also comply with the specific equality duties imposed by the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties)(Wales) Regulations 2011, SI 2011/1064 ("the Regulations"), particularly regulation 8 (imposing specific duties to make arrangements for assessing the impact of its policies/ practise and monitoring of the same).

5. Background Papers

None.