

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND HOUSING COMMITTEE

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES PROGRAMME - REPORT ON FIRST YEAR OF OPERATION

Purpose

1. The Local Government and Housing Committee requested a report on the first year of the Sustainable Communities programme.

Background

2. In April 1999 a new Welsh Office programme for funding local initiatives and projects was introduced. Its purpose was to secure the sustainability of communities where there were approved proposals for investment in the housing stock, or where there had been recent investment in the housing stock.

3. The funding available for 1999-2000 was £250,000, which was also available for each of the two subsequent financial years. The National Assembly funds up to 75 per cent of the total cost of successful bids. Revenue funding was granted for up to three years, subject to annual review and satisfactory progress against agreed objectives and targets. Bids were also invited for capital funding.

4. The funding powers are under Section 126 of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996.

5. Funds were targeted via the development programmes of both registered social landlords and local authorities or as an addition to any of the existing People in Communities projects.

6. The key criterion was to complement major investment completing or commencing in the current financial year, either new development or regeneration or, in the case of People in Communities to support and implement an element within an agreed community plan.

7. 42 nominations were received totalling, in the first year, £1,070,754. An assessment team was set up to look at the nominations which included Housing and Community Renewal Area Managers who deal with local authority/registered social landlord investment throughout Wales and officials from Social Inclusion Branch, Housing Performance and Finance Division and Children and Families Division.

8. In February 2000 Mr Peter Law announced a package to fund 15 local projects. These provide a range of services and facilities that help enhance life in communities in Wales. The **Annex** provides a list of those successful bids and their allocations.

9. A broad range of projects have been funded through the Sustainable Communities programme, such as childcare facilities and mother and toddler groups and a healthy living centre. Many training initiatives have also been developed and the 11 schemes which have a training element form a major part of the programme's first year. A sample of some of the projects are listed below:

- The Gurnos Community Ceramics project in Merthyr Tydfil uses the medium of art to build personal confidence and self esteem. Here, residents of the estate are encouraged to build on their personal skills by participating in art classes - 42 residents currently take part every week. This scheme has developed considerably over the past six months, and due to its popularity, the Local Education Authority's Community Education Department has agreed to fund additional classes. Through attending these classes 10 residents have attained Open College Network qualifications and two former pupils are now tutoring classes. This scheme is also linked with the wider People in Communities initiative in the area and is tapping into the Intermediate Labour Market model developed through the People in Communities programme. Plans are being developed to create an Arts and Crafts retail outlet in Cyfarthfa Park at which the ceramics produced will be sold. This scheme serves as an excellent example of how a small project fits into the wider community. Research is also being carried out into the potential for creating a separate community company that will trade over the internet.

- Another scheme which demonstrates this successful link with People in Communities is the Peulwys Sports Wall in Conwy. Funding was given to complement the regeneration on the Peulwys Estate which is funded through the PIC programme. The Sustainable Communities programme funded a sports wall for the children and youths of the estate for whom the estate had no facilities. This provision has had a huge positive impact on the estate.

- An Information Technology training project has been funded at Caerau, Cardiff. Residents of the community are actively encouraged to participate in a learning activity in order to secure employment.

- A project in Gwynedd on the Pentre Helen Estate has enabled six residents to enroll on an NVQ in Business Administration.

- The Bettws Community Regeneration project in Bridgend has enabled residents to find employment and additionally other residents of this estate are enrolled on advanced Information Technology courses with a view to seeking employment and

work placements.

- A scheme to help people gain employment has supported seven residents into employment in Merthyr Vale.

- Community Development workers play an essential role in encouraging residents to undertake learning activities and six development workers are funded through the Sustainable Communities programme. Apart from the training element, these workers allow residents living on an estate to take part in community activities and importantly to have a say in what happens in their community. An example of this good practice is provided by Mount View Regeneration in Merthyr Vale, a second Sustainable Communities project in Merthyr Vale, which actively involves the local residents in the decision making process. Sixty per cent of residents actively participate in the Mount View regeneration project.

Some difficulties were encountered - some projects experienced delays in recruiting workers and others had the completion of building works delayed. One project was delayed for nine months because of staff changes in the lead organisation.

However all schemes are now up and running and activity reports are starting to reflect the hard work which has been put in.

Position to Date

10. In July this year the Assembly Secretary for Local Government and Housing announced the second round for funding under the programme. The 2000-01 provision is £600,000 and a one-off addition of £400,000 agreed by the Minister for Finance under end-year flexibility arrangements. From 2001-02 onwards this has been amalgamated within the budget for 'community purposes' for which the total under draft budget proposal is £20.054 million.

11. For the second round the eligibility criteria have been revised. Invitations were extended to Voluntary Organisations and County Voluntary Councils to foster a more inclusive approach. The key principles were local partnership, local strategic directions and 'joining up' with existing local activities and projects.

12. 180 nominations have been received and these are now with the assessment team comprising Area Managers, Housing and Community Renewal Division, Performance and Finance Division. As part of the process the bids have been assessed by two external members of the Social Disadvantage Branch, Dr Dave Adamson and Barbara Castle. Dr Dave Adamson is a social exclusion expert with the University of Glamorgan and Barbara Castle is a community development practitioner, both on secondment to the Division.

Compliance

13. There are no new issues of compliance.

14. There are no issues of regularity or propriety.

Financial Implications

15. Expenditure in 2000-01 will be accommodated within budget provision and in the next two financial years within the draft budgets presented to the Assembly on 26 October which are subject to Assembly ratification. Financial Planning Division have been consulted about this paper and are content with the financial aspects.

Cross-Cutting Themes

16. The projects within Sustainable Communities provide a range of services and facilities that will help enhance life in communities throughout Wales. They sit well with the National Assembly's objectives set out in *betterwales.com* and *A Sustainable Wales*. One of the three major themes of *betterwales.com* is improving the life of everyone in Wales and developing the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Another is tackling social disadvantage, and the development of an inclusive society where everyone has the chance to fulfill their potential.

Action for subject committee

17. To note.

Contact Point:

Sue Wood

Supported Housing and Information Branch

Housing and Community Renewal Division

November 2000

Project Title	Total Grant Award over 3 Years	
	Capital	Revenue
<p>Bridgend, Lewiston Community Connections</p> <p>(To provide training development for representatives of the residents association and equip the community hall)</p>	£13,943	£10,475
<p>Caerphilly, Community Capacity Building</p> <p>(Employment of a Community Development Worker)</p>	£12,225	£60,538
<p>Bridgend, Bettws Community Regeneration</p> <p>(Funding of two Community Development Workers)</p>		£66,782
<p>Cardiff, Caerau Community Development</p> <p>(Funding of a Community Development Worker and to equip and furnish community facilities)</p>	£4,882	£33,391
<p>Merthyr Tydfil, Mount View Community Regeneration</p> <p>(Funding of a Community Development Worker and to provide security measures across the Mount View Estate)</p>	£6,157	£33,391
<p>Conwy, Peulwys Youth – Sports Wall</p> <p>(To provide a play area for the children of the Peulwys Estate)</p>	£13,378	
<p>Gwynedd, Gwaun Gynfi Community</p> <p>(To improve basic facilities in the Ysgol Feithrin Nursery School and provide support for the residents association)</p>	£19,302	£24,775

<p>Merthyr Tydfil, Merthyr Vale</p> <p>(To fund a Project Manager at the Aberfan and Merthyr Vale Youth and Community Project)</p>		£60,000
<p>Merthyr Tydfil, Gurnos Community Ceramics Project</p> <p>(To fund a ceramics project at the Gurnos Community Workshop to encourage local residents in learning through the medium of art)</p>	£4,119	£16,125
<p>Neath Port Talbot, Intensive Housing Management Scheme</p> <p>(Provision of on-site Caretaker Service and provision of minibus for Dulais Valley Partnership Community Transport Scheme)</p>	£57,500	£39,250
<p>Pembrokeshire, Howarth Close, Healthy Living Centre</p> <p>(To provide a community building and associated play facilities)</p>	£32,500	£46,100
<p>Swansea, the Knowledge</p> <p>(Support for existing Community Regeneration officers to provide a comprehensive package of community development measures)</p>	£129,000	
<p>Swansea, Extension of the 104 Project Community House</p> <p>(To provide funding for furnishing and equipping a community house in Penderry)</p>	£16,500	£31,843
<p>Rhondda Cynon Taff, "Home Zone" Rhos Aberaman</p> <p>(To provide play and amenity space)</p>	£52,875	

Wrexham, Brynteg and Southsea Community Strategy		£79,185
(Funding of development staff to work in People in Communities areas)		