

GWYNEDD COUNCIL CABINET



Report to Gwynedd Council Cabinet meeting

Meeting Date: 28 March 2017

Cabinet Member: Councillor Ioan Thomas
Cabinet Member for Housing, Customer Care, Libraries, Deprivation and Equality

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Item Title: **Council Plan 2017-18:
Resources to extend the 'Working together against poverty'
project (project E3)**

1. DECISION SOUGHT

Commit £155,138 of additional funding, and continue with the remainder of the allocated funding, in order to extend the 'Working together against poverty' scheme for 2017-18 to realise commitments that are a part of the Council Plan 2017-18.

2. REASON WHY THE DECISION IS NEEDED

Committing resources from the Transformation Fund is an issue for the Cabinet.

3. INTRODUCTION

The Full Council adopted the 'Council Plan 2017-18' on the 2nd of March 2017.

'Working together against poverty' was identified as one of the projects that needed additional resources in order to continue to fulfil their commitments if extended for another year.

'Working Together against poverty' was therefore included as part of the Council Plan subject to the Cabinet's agreement to fund it.

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4. REASONING AND JUSTIFICATION BEHIND THE DECISION

The purpose of the project is to implement a program of initiatives to tackle poverty in Gwynedd in collaboration with partners. The project includes interventions to help residents cope with household income and debt management, as well as helping them to access information and services online.

The project includes a program of initiatives within the following areas:

1. *Provision of skills to cope with household income and debt management*
2. *Provision of skills to access information and services online*
3. *Provision of skills to access employment and prevent economic inactivity*

Here is a summary of the main outcomes for the project to date:

- Bring together 17 partners across Gwynedd from the private, public and voluntary sector through the Digital Resilience Steering Group, Financial Forum and Employment Group. These groups meet regularly to promote collaboration, coordinate provision and minimize duplication.
- Creation and adoption of the Gwynedd Anti-Poverty Work Plan, targeting residents and communities that suffer most from poverty, or are likely to suffer poverty as a result of welfare reform. The work plan supports the services of the Council and its partners to prioritise interventions to target the identified groups / communities.
- Securing £116,745 funding from the Big Lottery in collaboration with Citizens Online to deliver the Digital Resilience project (Gwynedd was one of 4 areas across the UK taking part in the project). Through the project 143 frontline staff from the Council and partner organisations including the Housing Associations, have been trained to support others to use the internet and 265 drop in sessions for residents across the county have been helped (estimating that around 500 people a week receive support).
- 118 frontline staff from the Council and partner organisations have been trained to support residents to deal and manage their money, with 1,285 residents supported to apply for Discretionary Housing Payment. In collaboration with CAB within the Communities First Areas we estimate that over £300,000 of debt has been managed and over £600,000 of additional income has been secured.
- Developing employment projects (TRAC, Ad-TRAC, OPUS and Communities for Work); developing tracking and referral systems between projects along with referrals to the Department of Work and Pensions (PACE, Work Program etc.) To date £2.8M of European Funding has been secured to support the projects, with 86 individuals supported (these projects will be operational up until 2020).
- Communicating with individuals and families affected by the welfare reform, to offer support along with developing the Council's Discretionary Housing Payment Policy in-

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line with the groups affected.

Securing the resources to extend the project would realise the following by March 2018:

- Continue to train frontline staff in financial and digital literacy.
- Continue to implement the Discretionary Housing Payment Fund to support families to avoid going into debt as a result of the bedroom tax.
- Provide support for Universal Credit claimants.
- Provide a suite of employment projects to support individuals to access employment opportunities.

Receiving additional funding from the Council to correspond with the new period of the Council Plan will allow the continued employment of the team who implement the project and host events to achieve the project outcomes. The Economy and Community Department, as always, will be proactive looking to use the Council's resources to attract additional funding from the Welsh Government and others such as the Big Lottery to increase and expand on the provision available through this project.

5. NEXT STEPS & TIMETABLE

Should the Cabinet commit further resources to the scheme, it will continue to the end of the Council Plan 2017-18 on 31 March 2018.

6. UNRHYW YMGYNGHORIADAU A GYNHALIUYD CYN ARGYMELL Y PENDERFYNIAD

Cabinet Members and senior officers were informally consulted regarding the continuation of the scheme before the matter was submitted to the Cabinet for a decision.

Chief Officers' Comments

Chief Executive

'Four requests for funding relate to these papers, all relating to commitments in the new strategic plan. Clearly, two are relatively small amounts and two are larger. Obviously the aim with such projects is to fund them from existing resources. I understand that insufficient funds are available for these requirements. However, it is suggested that these funds are provided for only a year to consider if more permanent resources can be redirected to these projects if they need to continue once the one-off funds come to an end.'

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Chief Finance Officer

'A number of deserving needs / uses will be competing for scarce resources from the Transformation Fund, and it is a matter for the Cabinet to prioritise the relevant applications.'

In the full Council on the 2nd of March 2017, when 'bids' for additional resources to meet unavoidable pressures on services were approved, I noted that the Council's main priorities, developmental matters to make a difference, were to be funded through the 'Strategic Plan' procedure. It is a matter for the Cabinet members, with the guidance of the Chief Executive, to prioritise the Transformation Fund to this end.

Following the Cabinet's decision on 22 November 2016 to approve the transfer of £635k to the Transformation Fund, I confirm that there is sufficient provision to realise the projects presented to the 28 March 2017 Cabinet meeting, and that further funds are in reserve for some further projects that may mature / come to the fore and reach the Cabinet for a decision in future.'

The Monitoring Officer

'As noted in the report these recommendations stem from commitments in the Council Plan for 2017-18 and are reasonable and appropriate proposals.'