

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: **ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

DATE: **THURSDAY, 19 MARCH 2015**

REPORT BY: **CHIEF OFFICER (COMMUNITY AND ENTERPRISE)**

SUBJECT: **COMMUNITIES FIRST UPDATE**

1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT

To update Members on the progress made in implementing the Communities First programme in Flintshire.

2.00 BACKGROUND

2.01 The Communities First programme was established by Welsh Government in 2001 to tackle poverty in the most deprived neighbourhoods in Wales. The programme has been reviewed and revised several times by Welsh Government; most recently in 2012 when the programme was substantially restructured and the current cluster based approach developed.

2.02 Flintshire now has two clusters; the West cluster covering parts of Mold, Holywell and Flint and the East cluster in Deeside. Each cluster has a Manager and a staff team to deliver the programme activities which are focused on the three Welsh Government themes of:

1. Learning Communities;
2. Healthy Communities; and
3. Prosperous Communities.

The clusters each cover a population of approximately 9,000 people.

2.03 The funding for the programme has been confirmed by Welsh Government until 31 March 2016. The budget for the programme in Flintshire for 2015/2016 is £676,313.

3.00 CONSIDERATIONS

The main strands of activity for the programme in Flintshire are:

Prosperous communities

3.01 The programme supports six Job Clubs across the two clusters, each of which is held weekly in the Communities First neighbourhoods. The Job Clubs provide unemployed people with help to prepare CVs, undertake job search activities and to find suitable support and learning provision. Since April 2014 544 people have been engaged by the programme and 73 have found employment. New Job Clubs targeting young people not

in employment, education or training have been recently started in Mold and Sealand.

Communities First hosted a Jobs, Skills and Training event in Connah's Quay in September 2014. 572 people attended the event at which employers collectively advertised 700 job opportunities. 87 people found employment as a result of the event. A further event is planned for April 2015.

- 3.02 Flintshire has been selected as a pilot for the Welsh Government LIFT programme, delivered through Communities First. The programme provides a package of actions to reintegrate the long-term unemployed from families living in workless households back into the labour market. The project started in September 2014 and to date 60 people have been registered. Work placements have been secured with local companies to help the participants to gain the work experience needed to gain sustainable employment.
- 3.03 The Enterprise Club was launched by Communities First in November 2012 to support local entrepreneurs who have either established or considering establishing a business. It allows them to access vital business advice from the business community and provides networking opportunities and access to workshops on topics which may assist their development. To date 72 entrepreneurs have enrolled, with 35 new members joining in 2014/15. 21 entrepreneurs have started new businesses since the Club started.
- 3.04 The programme has supported the development of West Flintshire Community Enterprises, a social enterprise based in Holywell. The enterprise has established the Artisans Shop in Holywell High Street, occupying a vacant retail unit and, with Communities First support, has established an arts and crafts outlet which is enabling 50 local producers to display and sell their work. The retail unit also provides work experience opportunities for young people.
- 3.05 The Communities First programme supports financial inclusion projects to help residents to maximise their income. The programme provides financial literacy sessions and 61 individuals have been engaged through this process since April 2014. The programme also supports junior savers clubs to support young people in learning financial skills. 4 clubs have been supported and there are 150 savers enrolled to date. Communities First is working with the Citizens Advice Bureau to provide outreach advice services in the Communities First neighbourhoods.

Learning communities

- 3.06 The programme engages with residents who have not been in formal learning for some time and encourages them to re-engage with learning, often in a community rather than a classroom setting. Learning is accredited wherever possible and covers a very diverse range of subjects including computing, first aid and food safety. Training is

provided by mainstream providers such as Coleg Cambria and WEA Cymru and learners are encouraged to progress into further high level learning once their confidence has been raised.

- 3.07 Science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) workshops with unemployed people and schools have been a priority for the programme due to the importance of the manufacturing sector to Flintshire and the need to encourage new entrants, especially young women. Two schools and 73 individuals have taken part in STEM workshops since April 2014.
- 3.08 New retail and construction academies were established in February 2015. Twenty places have been created and filled for a programme of sector-specific learning for unemployed people. Training includes first aid, health and safety at work, presentation skills, European Computer Driving Licence and customer service (retail academy) and Construction Skills Certification Scheme (construction academy) training.

Healthy communities

- 3.09 The programme works with mainstream health providers to engage with the residents of the Communities First neighbourhoods. Activities to promote healthy lifestyles are held within the communities including fitness sessions and art therapy courses.
- 3.10 Through the Welsh Government Add to Your Life programme older residents have been engaged to signpost them to support services and to reduce isolation.
- 3.11 The Come and Cook initiative, run in partnership with Flying Start, provided parents of young children with accredited learning in food safety and paediatric first aid as part of a six week programme of learning about healthy eating.
- 3.12 The future of the programme beyond March 2016 remains unclear but Welsh Government has indicated that it is likely to continue in some form. Further integration with the Families First and Flying Start programmes is expected and these programmes are already closely linked in Flintshire. Welsh Government, in partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions, is in the process of developing the Communities4Work project which will provide further support to long term unemployed people in Communities First areas by providing employment mentors in each cluster.

4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.01 That Members note the progress made in delivering the programme in Flintshire.

5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.01 The Communities First programme is 100% funded by the Welsh Government. Management costs incurred by the Council are reclaimed from the programme.

6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT

6.01 The Communities First Programme is responsible for developing policy and practice to mitigate deprivation in Flintshire relating to low household income, unemployment, low levels of skills and educational achievement, and poor health. The programme is undertaking a range of interventions such as local labour market initiatives, community based learning and healthy lifestyle opportunities.

7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

7.01 None.

8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT

8.01 None.

9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.01 All staff employed through the programme will have their contracts extended to meet the 31 March 2016 funding extension.

10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED

10.01 None.

11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

11.01 The Communities First programme in Flintshire includes the development of an annual engagement plan, approved by Welsh Government, which sets out how stakeholder feedback is used to inform the development and operation of the programme.

12.00 APPENDICES

None.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Contact Officer: Niall Waller
Telephone: 01352 702137
Email: niall.waller@flintshire.gov.uk