

**Report To:** Performance Scrutiny Committee

**Date of Meeting:** 20 March 2014

**Lead Member / Officer:** Lead Member for Social Care –Adults and Children’s Services/Head of Adult and Business Services

**Report Author:** Strategic Development Service Manager

**Title:** Community Development Agency

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**1. What is the report about?**

This report is about the proposed changes to the Community Development Agency following the closure of the European funded New Work Connections Project and the reduction of £25k from the Agency’s budget as part of the Council’s required £8.5m savings target.

**2. What is the reason for making this report?**

To provide information regarding the steps being taken to make the necessary efficiency savings whilst ensuring that appropriate services will still be available for the individuals and community groups affected.

**3. What are the Recommendations?**

It is recommended that the Committee considers the actions being taken to ensure that alternative ways are found of providing the range of services currently provided by the Community Development Agency on reduction to their budget of £25,000.

**4. Report details.**

- 4.1 The Community Agency was initially established in 1985 through Urban Aid Funding, as part of a programme for social and community development in the county of Clwyd. It is now part of Adult and Business Services within Denbighshire County Council.
- 4.2 During this time the Agency, through its well-equipped “practical” resources centre, has supported numerous third sector groups and individuals and, over the years, it has also been successful in drawing down substantial amounts of funding to support various community activities. (Please see Appendix 1 for details of usage)
- 4.3 Since 2010, the Community Development Agency, in addition to its own activities, has also made its facilities available for use by participants of New Work Connections, a major European Funded project, and provided office accommodation for its staff.
- 4.4 The Community Development Agency is undoubtedly a very important resource for the many individuals and community groups who have been utilising it all these years

and benefiting from its resources. However, changes to the funding and delivery of services need to be considered for two main reasons.

- 4.5 The first reason is that the New Work Connections project came to an end on 28<sup>th</sup> February. For the past four years, the Community Development Agency has been an important part of the New Work Connections project and all of the staff, with the exception of two, have been funded by the project. In fact, it has only been possible to maintain the Agency over the past four years because of our success in gaining European funding. Although some staff will be retained until 31<sup>st</sup> May for closure work on the project, funding for direct work with individuals finished at the end of February. It would not be feasible to operate the agency with just two members of staff and we have concluded that they could be more efficiently utilised in a general community development role within Denbighshire Adult & Business Services, linked to the requirement of the new Social Services and Wellbeing legislation.
- 4.6 Enquiries have been made about the possibility of further European funding for the New Work Connections project but the next relevant funding stream will not be available for at least 12 months and Adult & Business Services does not have the resources required for all the intensive work involved in preparing a bid and dealing with all the complexities and risks of such a major project.
- 4.7 The second reason is the extremely difficult financial situation facing the County Council. Given the need to find savings of £8.5 million in the next financial year, difficult decisions have to be made about reducing services. There is a need, of course, to protect statutory frontline services to vulnerable individuals, but the Community Development Agency is not in this category and savings of £25,000 per annum have been identified in relation to the accommodation costs of the Agency.
- 4.8 An intensive effort is underway to identify alternative ways of providing services to current users of the CDA as well as any financial contributions to the £25,000 needed in efficiency savings. We are also exploring other building options in Rhyl for accommodating the service, such as Morfa Clwyd, a shop in the White Rose Centre and a local church on Water Street.
- 4.9 With regard to the County Council itself, links can be made with the future development of the library service and officers are exploring this, as well as other options such as Adult Learning, in greater detail. The work undertaken at the CDA undoubtedly contributes to enhancing basic skills and this could contribute to County Council initiatives in this area.
- 4.10 It has been established that New Work Connections will pay property costs of approximately £4,000 for April and May, as the project's remaining staff will be based at the CDA for the project's closure work. There is also some Supporting People funding (approx. £13,000 in 2014/15) which has been agreed can be used towards staffing costs at the Agency, which would be able to contribute to the £25,000 savings required. The total amount of £17,000 towards the building costs will enable more time to develop alternative ways of delivering the service and the building currently being used in the Railway Station will remain operational until this is identified.
- 4.11 In addition to this, enquiries are being made with the Rhyl Community Partnership, which receives funding as part of the long-running contract between N Power and the

Coastal Partnership (N Power has now been replaced by RWE Renewables). A decision on whether they can make a contribution is expected in a few weeks' time. This Partnership was originally responsible for funding much of the CDA's equipment.

4.12 Substantial progress has, therefore, been made in both identifying ways of continuing services for existing users as well as making financial savings. However, further work will continue on all of this as there is a need to make sure that appropriate services will be in place for 2014/15 but also wish to ensure longer-term sustainability.

## **5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?**

In relation to the Corporate Plan, the following priorities are relevant:

- Developing the local economy: the CDA provides advice and support which helps people move into employment and we are exploring ways that this can continue.
- Modernising the council to deliver efficiencies and improve services for our customers: the issues at stake here are the need to modernise services through community-based options replacing services directly provided by DCC.

## **6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?**

There are no costs involved. Adult and Business Services has identified savings of approx. £25,000 by ceasing to fund the property costs of the CDA.

## **7. What are the main conclusions of the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) undertaken on the decision? The completed EqIA template should be attached as an appendix to the report.**

A draft EqIA has been completed and will be finalised as part of the final solution.

## **8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?**

8.1 The proposal to remove the funding from the Community Development Agency was included in the Members' Budget Workshops in the Autumn of last year.

8.2 Questionnaires have been completed with individuals in order to identify the services that they have been receiving as well as any suitable alternatives from their perspective. With regard to continuation of services, either in their present form or through alternative provision, consultations are taking place with Denbighshire Voluntary Services Council, Communities First, Rhyl City Strategy and various Departments of the County Council. Denbighshire Voluntary Services Council does not have the required resources at this time, but has agreed to engage with Third Sector organisations on our behalf. Discussions with Communities First have been particularly fruitful and it is possible that two of their officers, who are involved in Adult Learning, could be based at the CDA periodically and offer support to individuals. They are also considering additional ways of helping.

## **9. Chief Finance Officer Statement**

Not required.

**10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?**

The Community Development Agency is a very well-known resource in Rhyl and is highly valued by many citizens who have used it over the years. Some of the individuals who use the centre are vulnerable for various reasons and there would be risks involved in closing the centre without identifying alternative provision. The various steps referred to in the report are a means of mitigating these risks.

**11. Power to make the Decision**

Scrutiny's powers in relation to considering any matter affecting the area or its inhabitants is set out in paragraph 6.3.2(c) of the Constitution.

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## **Appendix 1**

### **Numbers Using the Community Development Agency**

#### **Period 10th - 14th February 2014**

**NWC:** 21 unique individuals making 35 visits ( NWC service has now ceased)

**Others:** 47 unique individuals making 77 visits  
+ 9 "Casual" visits

**Groups:** 8 unique groups making 10 visits  
(using a range of resources eg. photocopying / printing / comb binding / laminating / equipment loan etc.)

#### **Nov 2013 - Jan 2014**

No. of unique Groups: 53 No. of Visits: 150

No. of unique Individuals: 250 No. of Visits: 1,015

In addition, there are a number of casual, drop in visits which are not practical to record

#### **During the period 2012 - 2013**

150 Groups made upwards of 600 visits

769 Individuals using the facilities made 4,765 visits

#### **Organisations which have been initiated, supported and developed locally include:**

- **Clwyd Coast Credit Union Ltd**
- **Rhyl Adventure Playground Association**
- **Benefits Advice Shop**
- **West Rhyl Young People's Project**
- **Mediation Service**
- **Denbighshire Bond Bank**
- **Community Recycling Project:**
- **Morfa Bach Tenants' Association**
- **Bruton Park Residents' Association:**
- **Marsh Community Association**
- **Abbey Street Residents' Centre**
- **Lakeside Residents' Association**
- **South West Central Residents Association**
- **Denbighshire Tenants' & Residents' Association**

Other projects assisted include: environmental projects, education initiatives, women's groups, healthy living initiatives, community safety, gay and lesbian support group and many more.