

Report to: Partnerships Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: 19 January 2017

Lead Member/Officer: Anti-Poverty Lead for the Council/
Head of Business Improvement & Modernisation

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Title: Communities First in Denbighshire

1. What is the report about?

- 1.1 Partnerships Scrutiny Committee received a report during the summer which detailed progress made with the Communities First programme in Denbighshire for 2015/16. This report seeks to provide a further update to the end of quarter 2 (September 2016). Section 1 of Appendix 1 provides an overview of the projects being undertaken and of the outcomes achieved.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

- 2.1 As requested by Members, the report provides information on the progress to date with the work of Communities First in Denbighshire, the number of projects with which it is involved, the number of people helped into work/sustainable employment and funding allocated to it.

3. What are the Recommendations?

- 3.1 The recommendation is for the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee to comment on the contents of the attached report (Appendix 1).

4. Report Details

- 4.1 Communities First is the Welsh Government's community focussed tackling poverty programme. The programme provides funding for Lead Delivery Bodies within local authority areas known as Communities First Clusters to narrow the economic, education/skills and health gaps between our most deprived and more affluent areas. It has three strategic objectives helping to achieve these outcomes:
- Prosperous Communities.
 - Learning Communities.
 - Healthier Communities.

The programme has 52 Communities First Clusters which between them work with all of the communities which are eligible for inclusion in the programme.

- 4.2 The North Denbighshire Cluster consist of 8 Lower Super Output Areas (LOSAs) in Rhyl and Upper Denbigh. Each cluster is managed by a Lead Delivery Body (LDB) which is responsible for ensuring that the programme is well-managed, that funding is used to deliver the agreed outcomes and that communities are fully involved. The LDB for the Denbighshire cluster is the Cooperative.
- 4.3 Communities First in Denbighshire currently has 1,152 participants across 14 projects. 798 delivery sessions have been undertaken and 390 volunteer hours have been given so far during 2016/17. Section 1 of Appendix 1 provides more detail in relation to the outcomes that have been achieved during the first two quarters of 2016/17, across the different projects.
- 4.4 On 11 October 2016, the Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Tackling Poverty (Carl Sargeant) stated "I am minded to phase out the Communities First programme while establishing a new approach to meet the challenges of the future". The Welsh Government have also launched a programme of engagement with stakeholders on the Welsh Government's proposed new approach to building resilient communities. It is anticipated that more will be known of the future of Communities First following this consultation, which closes mid-January 2017.

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

- 5.1 The work of the Communities First Programme contributes to and compliments the work of the other Tackling Poverty Programmes delivered by the Council; (i) Families First, (ii) Flying Start and (iii) Supporting People; jointly reporting to the Tackling Poverty Group and ultimately contributing to the delivery of the Well-being Plan.

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

- 6.1 The Communities First North Denbighshire Cluster was awarded £666,020 by Welsh Government for 2016/17. Much of this goes towards staffing costs and for work commissioned to deliver projects. It is anticipated that there will be a significant reduction in funding whether the programme is phased out or not. There is currently no indication of the level of any funding cut.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment? The completed Well-being Impact Assessment report can be downloaded from the website and should be attached as an appendix to the report.

- 7.1 A Well-being Impact Assessment will be completed once confirmation is received about whether or not the programme will cease and if it is to cease, the plans for phasing out, including timescales and budgets and therefore implications.

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

- 8.1 Partnerships Scrutiny Committee regularly receives reports on the progress of the Communities First programme in Denbighshire.

8.2 Once Welsh Government announce the decision regarding the future of the programme along with associated timeframes and budget, formal exit strategies will be devised and shared with appropriate stakeholders.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

9.1 A statement from the Chief Finance Officer is not required for this report.

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

10.1 The main risk is the uncertainty about whether the programme will be phased out and the resulting impact on those Denbighshire residents supported by the projects, should it cease.

11. Power to make the Decision

11.1 Local Government Act 2000, Section 21.

11.2 Section 7.4.2 (e) of the Council's Constitution outlines Scrutiny's powers with respect to scrutinising the performance of other public bodies operating within the Council's area and inviting reports from them on their activities and performance.

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