

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET

19 OCTOBER 2021

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR COMMUNITIES

INFUSE PROGRAMME

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update Cabinet on progress in developing the Cardiff Capital Region Challenge Fund and Infuse Programme and to request approval to enter into a Partnership Agreement with Monmouthshire County Council for the Infuse Programme.

2. Connection to corporate well-being objectives / other corporate priorities

- 2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate well-being objectives under the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**:-

1. **Supporting a successful sustainable economy** – taking steps to make the county borough a great place to do business, for people to live, work, study and visit, and to ensure that our schools are focussed on raising the skills, qualifications and ambitions for all people in the county borough.
2. **Smarter use of resources** – ensure that all resources (financial, physical, ecological, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the creation of resources throughout the community that can help to deliver the Council's well-being objectives.

3. Background

- 3.1 In October 2020, the Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) Cabinet approved the £10m CCR Challenge Fund to focus on local wealth re-building in a post-COVID state, through solving societal challenges that will have economic impact and potential commercial-scale opportunities. The purpose of the Fund is to demonstrate how applying innovation to big challenges can promote novel solutions and radical improvements.
- 3.2 Following approval of the Outline Business Case by the CCR Cabinet in June 2020, the CCR Challenge Fund team conducted, a "Challenge Hack", in July 2020 with political leaders and senior officials from the CCR Local Authorities to further refine the thematic areas. Three priority themes emerged, and these were:

- accelerating decarbonisation – flood, transport and public estate;
- community cohesion – town centres and high streets; and
- wellbeing – food and health/ food security

These priority themes will deliver against the Challenge Funds key objectives:

- solve the greatest societal challenges across the region;
- deliver economic impact for the region;
- drive commercial scalable opportunities;
- create innovative solutions; and
- build local wealth.

3.3 The Infuse Programme has been designed alongside this to develop innovation skills and capability alongside consideration of the changes and challenges we are facing, so that learning and value is applied and can continue to spread and scale. Infuse received approval from CCR Cabinet in October 2020 and WEFO approval in November 2020.

3.4 The Infuse Programme will introduce officers to new process and concepts and provide a safe and supported environment for them to try them out by:

- Demonstrating how new skills, tools and different ways of thinking can help solve shared regional challenges by taking a collaborative approach
- Developing new tools and methods that participants can take on and use outside of the Programme to improve future service delivery – creating efficiencies, saving money or improving the impact of service delivery for the people who use and deliver them
- Ensuring better trained and equipped public servants that can develop their knowledge and practice so that they can take new skills back into their own organisations and share them with other colleagues

4. Current situation/proposal

4.1 The Infuse Programme will take a challenge-led approach, by identifying two thematic areas of high importance to the Cardiff Capital Region, for example looking at problems and opportunities linked to Decarbonisation. The Themes are the focus for each of the three work streams:

- Research and development - finding ways to test new ideas to understand what works and what does not
- Data for decision making - making the most of the vast amount of data that's available to people, by making better-informed decisions that improve public services
- Procurement – simplifying the process for procuring innovative goods and services and creating a culture and an environment for change

4.2 The Infuse Programme will be led by Monmouthshire County Council, as Lead Beneficiary, with the CCR Challenge Fund aspect directed by CCR City Deal team. Whilst the finances for each of the programmes will be operated and managed separately and in line with WEFO and CCR Terms and Conditions, the two elements will come together operationally and will align to present one comprehensive and complementary programme. It is envisaged that project ideas that come from the Infuse cohorts will be channelled into funding applications into the CCR Challenge Fund, so ideas that are identified regionally can have local impact.

4.3 The programme has been developed in partnership with the ten regional CCR Local Authorities, the CCR City Deal Office, Y Lab (Wales' Public Service Innovation Lab),

Cardiff University and Nesta (the UK Innovation Foundation). Monmouthshire County Council will be the manager of the Programme.

- 4.4 This comprehensive programme of activity has been designed to run for three years until December 2023. While participants will work within one of the three work streams identified above (R&D, Data or Procurement), there will be opportunities for collaboration and sharing between teams and in-depth engagement with senior leaders. This will ensure that the right level of buy-in and leadership support for the programme is secured to enable it to be successful over the long-term.
- 4.5 Through a series of cohorts, it is intended that a target of 120 officers from across the region will be involved on the three year period of the programme. Officers will be recruited, via open call at regular intervals, to form a number of small teams (2-3 per cohort) that will take on collaborative projects that will help them to develop and test new skills, whilst working towards solving a shared challenge.
- 4.6 It is anticipated that there will be the creation of six cohorts (three sequential cohorts per theme), estimating that each of the ten Local Authorities in the region will commit to a member of staff, from a range of disciplines, for one to two days per week for a period of 3-6 months. This will enable staff to complete the work envisaged in the adaption, data and procurement labs, to develop solutions within the two themes and generate sufficient match funding to release the requested level of ESF.
- 4.7 In order to participate fully in the Infuse Programme, BCBC is required to enter into a Partnership Agreement as a Joint Beneficiary with Monmouthshire County Council, along with the other Joint Beneficiaries. The other Joint Beneficiaries are Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council, Vale of Glamorgan County Borough Council, Torfaen County Borough Council, Newport City Council, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, The County Council of the City and County of Cardiff, Caerphilly County Borough Council, Cardiff University and Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council.
- 4.8 Infuse requires an organisational shift to innovation. This requires the whole organisation and all layers of management involvement. Infuse recognises that a problem needs to be framed correctly, this requires many lenses, those of the operational day to day involvement right up to strategic level, different viewpoints consider different perspectives and priorities. All challenges considered as part of the programme are around public service delivery and therefore the staff delivering these services are often best placed to identify, frame and start to focus on potential solutions.
- 4.9 The learning captured by the Infuse participants will be captured by the programme's continuous improvement evaluation, additionally case studies will be released and shared with all joint beneficiaries as examples of best practice become clear. There will also be other opportunities to share the learning through webinars and workshops. The learning of those who go through the programme can be the catalyst to a wider innovation culture change with the Infuse Associates, having the Alumni for support, championing innovation throughout the region.
- 4.10 Negotiations are currently taking place with the parties over the final terms of this Partnership Agreement. Therefore, Cabinet approval is sought to delegate authority to the Corporate Director Communities to negotiate and agree the final terms of the

Partnership Agreement in consultation with the Chief Officer – Legal and Regulatory Services, HR & Corporate Policy and the Interim Chief Officer, Finance, Performance and Change and, subject to such agreement, to enter into the Partnership Agreement. If, following negotiations, final terms cannot be agreed between the parties or any perceived risks to BCBC exist that cannot be removed or mitigated then BCBC will not continue to take part in the Infuse Programme.

5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

5.1 There is no direct impact on the Council's policy framework and procedure rules.

6. Equality Act 2010 implications

6.1 An initial Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) screening has identified that there would be no negative impact on those with one or more of the protected characteristics, on socio-economic disadvantage or the use of the Welsh Language. It is therefore not necessary to carry out a full EIA on this policy or proposal.

7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 implications

7.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 Assessment Template has been completed and a summary of the implications from the assessment relating to the five ways of working is below:

- Long-term: Although the Programme is funded for a limited period of three years the solutions that will be developed will impact longer term in relation to developing a broader skills set throughout the public sector within the CCR.
- Prevention: The Programme will enable officers to apply into the CCR Challenge Fund the focus of which is providing economic support for local economies in the sectors hardest hit by the economic fallout of COVID-19 – public transport, food, tourism and retail/ leisure and hospitality.
- Integration: The Programme aligns with the Well Being of Future Generations Act and the wellbeing goals as well as the five ways of working. It focuses on understanding and solving societal problems, by using innovative techniques whilst sharing learning at a regional level.
- Collaboration: The Programme is a partnership across the public, third and academic sectors. Benefits will be felt across the whole CCR.
- Involvement: The content of the Programme has been developed with CCR Local Authority Officers and Members.

8. Financial implications

8.1 The decision is to accept an offer to be part of the Infuse Programme along with the nine other Local Authorities in the Cardiff City Region and sign associated funding agreements as a joint beneficiary. Monmouthshire County Council are the lead beneficiary and will be the recipient of the funding. BCBC contribution will be in the form of staff match time in kind. Signing as a joint beneficiary does not create a legally binding agreement between a Joint Beneficiary and the Welsh Ministers.

8.2 The total financial value of the programme, which will be managed by Monmouthshire County Council is set out in table 1 below.

Table 1 – Infuse Programme value

Eligible Expenditure - ESF	£3,228,278
Ineligible expenditure – ESF (where applicable)	£0
ESF maximum Financial Support (EU grant) payable:	£2,421,206
Total anticipated match funding	£807,072
Rate of Financial Support (as a percentage of ESF Eligible Expenditure (revenue)):	74.99%
Flat rate financing for Indirect Costs	40%
Total Cost of the Operation	£3,228,278

8.3 BCBC’s contribution to the project will be in the form of staff match time in-kind. It is anticipated there will be the creation of six cohorts (three sequential cohorts per theme), estimating that each LA will commit to a member of staff, from a range of disciplines, for one to two days per week for a period of 3-6 months. This will enable staff to complete the work envisaged in the adaption, data and procurement labs, to develop solutions within the two themes and generate sufficient match funding to release the requested level of ESF. If sufficient match funding is not generated to support the programme then the overall programme envelope will need reviewing, and maybe reducing, to ensure that sufficient grant can be drawn down to cover the costs of the programme. This may result in a smaller project.

9. Recommendations

9.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:

9.1.1 note the progress in developing the Cardiff Capital Region Challenge Fund and Infuse Programme;

9.1.2 delegate authority to the Corporate Director Communities, in consultation with the Chief Officer – Legal and Regulatory Services, HR & Corporate Policy and the Interim Chief Officer, Finance, Performance and Change to agree and approve the terms of the Infuse Partnership Agreement any further deeds and documents which are ancillary to that agreement and to arrange execution of those agreements on behalf of the Council.

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Background documents:
None