

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET

18 JANUARY 2022

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR COMMUNITIES

THE CONNECT ENGAGE LISTEN TRANSFORM REGIONAL PROJECT

1. Purpose of report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek permission for Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) to enter into a regional Relationship Agreement relating to funding and delivery of the Connect Engage Listen Transform (CELT) Project, funded through the UK Government Community Renewal Fund (CRF) with Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, Caerphilly County Borough Council, Cardiff Council, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, Monmouthshire County Council, Newport City Council, Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council, the Vale of Glamorgan Council and Torfaen Torfaen County Borough Council.

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**:

- **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.
- **Helping people and communities to be more healthy and resilient** - taking steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services. Supporting individuals and communities to build resilience, and enable them to develop solutions to have active, healthy and independent lives.
- **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 The ending of the European Social Fund (ESF) during 2022 and 2023 has created a need to replace funding especially that which focuses on employability.

3.2 The 10 Local Authorities who form the Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) City Deal are part of the Regional Skills Partnership and have been working as a Local Authority Cluster Group to discuss new funding opportunities which could replace the ESF employability funding.

- 3.3 The UK Government created a new fund called the Community Renewal Fund (CRF) and working together all the local authorities that form the CCR developed the CELT project which was submitted by Torfaen County Borough Council (TCBC) on behalf of the CCR to UK Government on the 18th June 2021.
- 3.4 The BCBC element of the project requested £274,817 from the CRF based on outcomes of working with 140 clients and to get 26 into employment in the Bridgend County Borough area. The whole project submitted by TCBC requested £1,947,234. The project was initially set to operate from July 2021 to March 31st 2022.
- 3.5 It is anticipated that the CRF may act as a pilot to inform the development of the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF), which is considered by many as a substantial replacement of the European Union monies and the on-going mechanism to provide funding support for employability delivery in the future.
- 3.6 Whilst the proposal submitted by TCBC was for the CCR, there was the opportunity for each local authority to respond to needs as they exist locally. The key areas of focus for BCBC were proposed as:
- Engaging participants furthest from the labour market working with the third sector and mentoring and signposting them to improve their employability, focusing on youth and adults
 - Engage with GPs and other health providers to increase employability referrals from clients who have health barriers
 - Work with clients who want to develop a new enterprise and support them to access mainstream business support
 - Developing a new employability partnership model to be called Bridgend Employability Network (BEN)
 - To work on piloting a new Triage database to ensure clients get the correct support

4. Current situation/proposal

- 4.1 On the 4th November 2021 TCBC received confirmation from UK Government that the CELT application was successfully approved. As the initial timescales saw the project run from July 2021 to March 31st 2022 the late notification on the outcome of the application prompted UK Government to extend the project by 3 months to June 30th 2022 with a revised start date of November 3rd 2021.
- 4.2 At the point that TCBC consolidated the CCR bid, different outcomes were submitted against the BCBC request for funding. A new set of negotiated targets from those identified in 3.4 have been agreed (Table 1) and will be reflected in the Relationship Agreement. It is confirmed that despite the revised outcomes and shorted timescales for delivery of the project since the original request, the outcomes are still achievable.

Table 1 - BCBC Outcomes for CELT Funding

CELT Outcomes	BCBC Original submission	CELT Submitted to UK Government	New negotiated Working Targets

People	140	120	130
Into Employment	26	33	26
Into Education/ Training	30	75	40
Into Life Skills Support	15	80	40
Into Job Searching	50	65	50
Engaging with Benefits System	11	6	6

- 4.3 Each local authority has a key milestone within the CELT bid and was chosen to show the breadth and reach of the project so that capacity and expertise could be demonstrated putting the region in good stead for future funding applications. The BCBC milestone is holding the first meeting of the new Bridgend Employability Network (BEN) which is scheduled to take place on 28th January 2022.
- 4.4 Currently TCBC are developing the Relationship Agreement for CELT which will need to be agreed with all of the other local authorities in order to progress the scheme. The agreement will set out the overall terms and conditions of the project and highlight BCBC specific detail in relation to outputs and funding, as summarised above. It is proposed therefore that the Corporate Director Communities is delegated authority to negotiate and agree the final version of the Relationship Agreement and that the project commence whilst that process is ongoing so that the outcomes can be achieved in the timescales.
- 4.5 The CELT Relationship Agreement will include an obligation on each local authority participant to establish an Operational Delivery Group which will be made up of representatives of each local authority and that will be responsible for the day to day running and management of the project and to make arrangements for a senior official of each participant to be a member of a Strategic Management Board which will oversee the project and share information and best practice, review progress and resolve outstanding issues, in particular those escalated by the Operational Delivery Group. It is proposed that the Employability and Enterprise Manager be nominated to represent BCBC on the CELT Strategic Management Board and that the Employability Team Leader be nominated to represent BCBC on the CELT Operational Delivery Group.

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 CELT project demonstrates the sustainable development principle by ensuring that by meeting the needs of the present they do not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This is evidenced through the 5 ways of working as follows:

- Long term – this project seeks to understand and mitigate the long-term implications on Bridgend County Borough residents of the withdrawal of EU funding for employability by seeking alternate funding.
- Prevention – working with partners to identify potential replacement funding opportunities.
- Integration – The CELT project contributes to the well-being goals: an Equal Wales, a Prosperous Wales, and a Healthier Wales. It contributes to the well-being objective of Reducing Social and Economic Inequalities.
- Collaboration – the success of this project and any future employability projects relies on collaboration with partners across the CCR region including local authorities, Department for Work and Pensions and Welsh Government.
- Involvement – a significant element of the CELT programme involves engaging with local residents, their families and communities.

8. Financial implications

8.1 The CELT project is fully funded by the UK Government CRF. TCBC have already accepted the funding offer from UK Government which sets out BCBC's requested allocation.

8.2 BCBC is not required to provide any match funding.

8.3 The Relationship Agreement will set out the detail of BCBC's allocated project funding (£274,817), and will passport the Terms and Conditions of the UK Government CRF offer to each of the CCR regions and set out the claims process to draw down the funding.

8.4 Due to time constraints the project will need to commence before all CCR parties have signed the Relationship Agreement which will contain the formal offer of funding and confirm the outputs. This will be underwritten by the Communities Directorate budget with the risk mitigated that TCBC have already received and accepted the CELT funding offer from UK Government.

9. Recommendations

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- Note progress in developing the CELT project as part of the future way of working in relation to the delivery of employability support in Bridgend County.
- Delegate authority to the Corporate Director Communities, in consultation with Chief Officer – Legal and Regulatory Services, HR and Corporate Policy and Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change to negotiate and enter into the CELT

Relationship Agreement, and any subsequent amendments to it as agreed and to enter into any further deeds and documents which are ancillary to the Relationship Agreement.

- Agree that the Employability and Enterprise Manager will represent BCBC on the CELT Strategic Management Board and that the Employability Team Leader will represent BCBC on the CELT Operational Delivery Group.

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Background documents: None