

PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL**Housing and Health Committee****28 January 2015****Development of an employability training enterprise, The Stepping Stones Project****Report by Executive Director (Housing and Community Care)****PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This purpose of this report is to inform Committee of the development of the Stepping Stones Project and ask Committee to endorse the use of the initiative, once established, to support work programmes of the Garage Site and Lock-Up Review and Estate Based Initiatives Scheme.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The benefits of offering purposeful opportunities which support personal development, increase employment chances and aid recovery and well-being are well recognised. These activities can be of considerable value as part of support plans to those who are leading chaotic lifestyles or who are vulnerable, acting as a stepping stone to more formal projects and initiatives.
- 1.2 In Perth and Kinross a number of voluntary agencies working in homelessness services and support have been working individually to create opportunities to support these kinds of employability projects/initiatives.
- 1.3 Both Churches Action for the Homeless (CATH) and Salvation Army have agreed in principle to take forward ideas to share resources and assets to enable the development of partnership working and a potential social enterprise organisation.
- 1.4 The recent development of the Council's Garage Site and Lock-up Review and Estate Based Initiatives, have highlighted opportunities to promote partnership working and develop social enterprises to undertake parts of this work, namely low level grounds maintenance and basic construction projects.
- 1.5 It is believed that by working in this way Housing and Community Care can increase the benefits of these important capital projects, achieving wider outcomes for people and communities.

2. PROGRESS TO DATE AND NEXT STEPS

- 2.1 A project team has been established and members have developed a project action plan. There is strong enthusiasm to achieve the long term goal of creating a sustainable social enterprise, however it has been recognised this will take time and there are number critical and complex activities that must be undertaken in parallel. It has been agreed the initial working name for the project will be Stepping Stones, and the project team are aiming to deliver the first employability programme by mid April 2015. The team includes representatives from:

- Churches Action for the Homeless (CATH)
- The Salvation Army
- The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP)
- Perth College
- Housing Repairs and Improvement Team, Housing and Community Care
- Customer and Community Engagement Team, Housing and Community Care

Three project workstreams have been established to develop key areas of work, namely:

- WS1: Social Enterprise governance structure and sustainability
- WS2: Learning programmes
- WS3: Health and safety

2.2 WS 1: Members of Project Team have undertaken research and made contact with a range social enterprises both locally and nationally to gain insight and advice and met with PKAVS's Social Enterprise Support. As result, it has been agreed that a company, limited by guarantee, would be the best initial structure to support the social enterprise. The governance structure will be in place by the end of January 2015 and it will be registered at Companies House, as RegenForce, and they will deliver the Stepping Stones Project.

2.2.1 A board of directors has been identified and includes people who have finance, legal and skills development expertise. The Board has the capacity within the governance structure to recruit further members and are actively seeking people who have experience in contracting and environmental management.

2.2.2 Funding of £31,000 has been allocated to enable the social enterprise structure to engage a development worker to develop Health and Safety processes and procedures, risk assessments and the referral pathway to deliver the Stepping Stones Project. This post is in currently in recruitment.

2.2.3 The project team have successfully applied for a further £59,000 from the Integrated Care Fund which will provide tools, equipment, transport and protective clothing for participants, as well as the cost of the learning programmes and materials. The funding will also cover the cost of a part-time work place supervisor to manage low-level environmental and ground management type projects of the Stepping Stones Project.

2.2.4 CATH has contributed funding to support the development of the social enterprise structure and its governance structure and capacity-building support for the directors. It is envisaged the new organisation will seek development support from the Big Lottery Investing in Ideas, Economic Development and make links with the Employability Network. There could also be potential to access Department of Works and Pension Grants, to secure the training element of the enterprise in 2016/17.

- 2.3 **WS2:** Activity in this Workstream is focused on developing the employability learning syllabus. Working with Perth College, initial thinking was to deliver a 26 week programme, however on advice of the DWP, this has been changed to delivering 4 x 12 week programmes. All participants need to make themselves available for work throughout the programme and will be excused job searches on the days they are taking part in the programme. Each 12 week programme will include either a basic construction or environmental Perth College course, resulting in a qualification. Participants can sign up for a maximum of two courses, to gain two qualifications, without the risk of their benefits being sanctioned.
- 2.3.1 Initial thoughts were that each successful participant who completed the programme would have the opportunity to gain a Construction Skills Certificate Scheme (CSCS Card). However, changes to the CSCS Card scheme now require applicants to have achieved the Health and Safety in a Construction Environment Course, which requires 40 hours of learning, as well as taking an online test. The learning required for this course is set at a higher level and could be offered as a progression element of this initiative. Work is underway with Perth College to identify the costs of delivering this further qualification. Progressing this will be a priority for the Stepping Stones Project.
- 2.4 **WS3** is identifying the basic health and safety requirements needed and this will expand when the specifics of the work programmes are known. In addition, information is being collated on current risk assessments already being delivered by those organisations involved. The Workstream will review the existing assessments that could be used and identify what needs to be developed.
- 2.4.1 A risk-based referral process is also being developed in relation to the recruitment process and management of each 12 week programme. Induction to the programme will be the critical first week activity and this group will be developing this as part of their actions.

3. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 This report provides information on the development of a Social Enterprise Employability Training Initiative, Stepping Stones and highlights the progress to date of the project's three workstreams.
- 3.2 Housing and Health Committee are asked to:
- (i) Note the progress to date in developing this social enterprise
 - (ii) Endorse this initiative, once established, to work on programmes of the Garage Site and Lock Up Review and Estate Based Initiatives scheme.

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1. IMPLICATIONS, ASSESSMENTS, CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

Strategic Implications	Yes / None
Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement	YES
Corporate Plan	YES
Resource Implications	
Financial	YES
Workforce	None
Asset Management (land, property, IST)	None
Assessments	
Equality Impact Assessment	None
Strategic Environmental Assessment	None
Sustainability (community, economic, environmental)	None
Legal and Governance	None
Risk	None
Consultation	
Internal	YES
External	YES
Communication	
Communications Plan	None

1. Strategic Implications

Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement

1.1 The Community Plan and Single Outcome objectives are all relevant to this report:

- (i) Giving every child the best start in life;
- (ii) Developing educated, responsible and informed citizens;
- (iii) Promoting a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable economy;
- (iv) Supporting people to lead independent, healthy and active lives; and
- (v) Creating a safe and sustainable place for future generations.

Corporate Plan

1.2 As above. The following Corporate Plan objectives are all relevant to this report.

2. Resource Implications

Financial

2.1 Funding of £59,000 has been allocated from the Integrated Care Fund to support the project.

Workforce

2.2 None

Asset Management (land, property, IT)

2.3 None

3. Assessments

3.1 None

4. Consultation

Internal

4.1 The Housing and Community Care Senior Management Team have agreed this report.

External

4.2 A range of stakeholders have been consulted in the development of this project including:

- Churches Action for the Homeless (CATH)
- The Salvation Army
- The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP)
- Perth College
- Housing Repairs and Improvement Team
- Customer and Community Engagement Team

5. Communication

5.1 None

6. Appendices

6.1 None.