

## **EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

### **POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 18 APRIL 2002**

#### **BELLSBANK WOMEN'S PROJECT SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT EVALUATION**

##### **Report by Director of Educational and Social Services**

### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to advise Members of Policy and Resources Committee of the outcome of the evaluation process of the Service Level Agreement with the Bellsbank Women's Project and to consider continuation of the project following expiry of the existing agreement.

### **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1** Bellsbank Women's Project was established as an Urban Aid Project in 1983 with the aim 'to provide educational opportunities for women living in the communities of Bellsbank and surrounding areas that will enable them to develop and realise their full potential as individuals, parents and active citizens.
- 2.2** At the end of the Urban Aid funding the project received annual funding from Strathclyde Regional Council and from 1996, East Ayrshire Council. In 1999 East Ayrshire developed and established a three year Service Level Agreement with the Project's management committee, which set targets for the Project and requires annual monitoring to access subsequent years funding.
- 2.3** The Project is managed by a management committee, elected annually by members at an Annual General Meeting. Membership is open to all adults living in the area on payment of an annual subscription.
- 2.4** The Project employs a part time project coordinator, 20 hours per week, and an administrative assistant for 10 hours per week and delivers courses and classes by employing sessional staff. In addition the project supports adults returning to learning by offering crèche provision if required.
- 2.5** In 1999 the Project was awarded £19,540 by this Committee with annual increases based on inflation until 2002 through the Service Level Agreement. Performance measures were not specified or developed within the Agreement at that time.

### **3 BELLSBANK PROFILE**

- 3.1** Bellsbank has a population of around 1,780 people. It is located close to Dalmellington and most statistics collated refer to both areas which collectively have a population of 3,908 people, of which 52% are women.

- 3.2** Statistical indicators show that the area has a lower than average number of adults who are economically active i.e. 53% in Dalmellington compared to 59% in East Ayrshire and 63% as a Scottish average.
- 3.3** Similarly the unemployment rate in the area is 21% compared to 13% in East Ayrshire. Amongst women the trend is repeated with 13% female unemployment compared to 8.7% elsewhere in East Ayrshire and 8.8% as a Scottish average.
- 3.4** Statistics support a high incidence of social and educational need in the area, particularly amongst women.

#### **4. REPORT**

- 4.1** The project aims are outlined at 2.1 above and its specific objectives include:
- To provide a wide range of learning opportunities in the form of classes/courses and self help groups;
  - To break down barriers that may prevent members from participating through the provision of childcare, subsidies and transport;
  - To target provision to those women who are socially excluded, in particular women on low income and lone parents;
  - To provide activities in the context of lifelong learning, addressing social exclusion to improve health, increase skills, raise confidence and increase community participation.
- 4.2** The aims and objectives of the project are compatible with East Ayrshire's Council Plan key priorities and also address the priorities of the Community Learning Strategy.
- 4.3** All services are provided in a socially inclusive way that fosters equality of opportunity and promotes active citizenship.

#### **5. PERFORMANCE**

- 5.1** Bellsbank Women's Project was subject to an evaluation between September-December 2001, by the Department of Educational and Social Services, Quality and Planning Section.
- 5.2** The evaluation concluded that the project's values, aims and terms are clearly in accord with the terms of the Core Service Level Agreement and its Agreement Schedule.
- 5.3** Self-evaluation of performance was undertaken by the Project and taken in conjunction with the Annual Report 2000-2001, the key performance measures requested by the evaluation officer were addressed.
- 5.4** Service users were not formally consulted for the evaluation, however staff and key stakeholders were consulted by questionnaire. All contributors agreed that the project had successfully addressed its stated aims and that it was doing an important job in empowering women in the area and enabling them to progress both as individuals and as a community.

- 5.5** The annual award, with inflation, for 2000/2001 amounted to £20,125. The cost of salaries totalled £19,324. The evaluation report shows a wage scale benchmark exercise which identifies that the staff, across the whole project, are paid less than comparable projects elsewhere in East Ayrshire.
- 5.6** The Project has made application to a number of other funding sources to facilitate the delivery of their work. This funding has been 'one off' payments and sources have included Health Board, Childcare Strategy and Minerals Trust. In addition the project fundraises, although the value is not large.

## **6. SUMMARY**

- 6.1** The evaluation process for the Project has provided evidence that the project is clearly addressing its stated aims as well as the aims, values and priorities of the Council
- 6.2** In particular the project has developed a clear approach to enabling women in the Bellsbank and surrounding areas to realise their full potential through the provision of a range of learning opportunities and activities to break down barriers.
- 6.3** In light of the positive evaluation of the initiative a new service level agreement should be developed which identifies clear standards and performance measures, targets and parameters attached to the stated objectives of the project. A system of performance management should be agreed prior to the implementation of a new contractual relationship.
- 6.4** The level of grant allocated should be reviewed, in particular staff remuneration compared to similar projects in the Council area. Staff remits should also be included in the Council's Job evaluation process.
- 6.5** To allow the preparation of the new service level agreement, an interim award should be made to the Project which allows the continuation of service delivery while the performance measures are developed in line with the recommendations of the evaluation. This would also support a review of staff remuneration levels.

## **7. LEGAL/POLICY IMPLICATIONS - NIL**

## **8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1** An initial Service Level Agreement payment of £19,540 was made to the Bellsbank Women's Project for the period 1999/2000, with a further inflation proofed sum of £20,125 awarded for 2001/2002. Salaries for 2000/2001 totalled £19,324.
- 8.2** Additional income has been obtained through appropriate grant applications and fund-raising activities.
- 8.3** An interim payment of £10,364 equates to 50% of the projects previously agreed award plus inflation.

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

**9.1** Members of Policy and Resources Committee are asked to:

- (i) approve the development of a second Service Level Agreement/Contract with Bellsbank Women's Project, for the period 2002/2005;
- (ii) make an interim award to the Project valued at £10,364 pending the production of the new Service Level Agreement; and
- (iii) otherwise note the contents of this report.

John Mulgrew  
Director of Educational and Social Services

25 March 2002  
AJ/SB

### **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

1. Service Level Agreement Evaluation Report

Members wishing further information should contact Kay Gilmour, Head of Community Support Tel: (01563) 576104 or Anne Jackson, Principal Officer Communities Tel: (01563) 576126.

**IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER: KAY GILMOUR**

**AGENDA**