

SUSTAINABLE GROWTH & ENVIRONMENT CAPITAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	Agenda Item No. 8
5 SEPTEMBER 2013	Public Report

Report of the Executive Director of

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COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER STRATEGY

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The community asset transfer strategy will provide a necessary policy framework to guide the current and future processes for working with community led groups that wish to take on the management responsibilities of a community asset.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- scrutinise the attached draft strategy, making suggestions for how it might be improved
- agree the draft strategy.
- recommend the draft strategy to Cabinet for approval.

3. LINKS TO THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

- 3.1 The Community Asset Transfer Programme should contribute across the full range of Sustainable Community Strategy priorities.

The strategy provides the framework to deliver:

- sustainable neighbourhood centres
- community empowerment approach that seeks to build the capacity of local groups
- retaining buildings of social value that directly support the needs of local people and contribute to making places better for people to live and work

4. BACKGROUND

4.1 National Context

- From the 1970s there have been community economic development initiatives that were based on using assets as a way of meeting social and economic objectives – this included community centres, community gardens and city farms.
- Asset transfer is increasingly seen as a means of achieving a range of key objectives from promoting civic renewal, community cohesion, active citizenship and improving local public services to tackling poverty and promoting economic regeneration. In 2007 the Quirk Review ('Making Assets Work: The Quirk Review of community management and ownership of public assets') signalled the transfer of public assets to community based organisations as a mainstream activity. The council has, over time, transferred assets to community organisations but to date this has not been within an overall policy framework. Key elements of the Localism Act relating to the 'Community Right to Bid' and the 'Right to Challenge' are intrinsically linked to the intentions and principles of this strategy.

Local Context

- The council sees community asset transfer as a positive opportunity to encourage and strengthen long term partnerships with the civil society sector that will contribute towards enhancing communities and their involvement in Peterborough. All successful transfers will be the beginning of long term relationships between the council and the successful civil society sector.
- The council has developed its strategic approach to asset management which includes community used buildings in localities. Community asset transfer offers a way of reconciling the consolidation of assets belonging to the council with a genuine community empowerment approach that seeks to build the capacity of local groups
- The council believes that through such asset transfer, local groups will be able to gain access to and secure other sources of additional investment

As part Peterborough's response to the Localism Act we aim to develop a proactive work programme on community asset transfer (CAT) over the next 5 years where it brings benefits and added value to communities, whilst contributing to the council's aims and priorities. The key drivers for this approach are community empowerment and council commitment to protect many locally valued community based facilities through community asset transfer.

The fast tracked implementation of the strategy is being driven by the requirement for a policy framework to be in place to support the current Gladstone School development. Asset transfers are not new to PCC but a unique challenge has arisen with this current development which presents as more than one group competing to manage the community centre. This strategy will provide a transparent and fair process to how community assets are assessed and managed

5. KEY ISSUES

5.1 The council wants to achieve the following outcomes through a proactive community asset transfer programme:

- Community empowerment and benefits to the wider local community via capacity building through the use of local skills, experience, knowledge and time. Groups will need to demonstrate they have the will and ability to undertake asset management responsibilities and outcomes will be assessed on a regular basis
- Retaining valued local provision, thus improving local services in times of austerity, while contributing to savings
- Delivering local services by extending the use of a building to directly address local needs via community led and community controlled assets
- Value for money and the ability to draw in other sources of funding not available to the council
- Social enterprise and social well being, including community cohesion
- Financial viability, long term sustainability and external investment. Initial capital investment may be required to make the building fit for transfer
- A stimulus to partnership working by delivery of council objectives via other partners
- Holistic strategic framework to manage council assets

6. IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 **Discrimination and Equality:** Equality Impact Assessment to be completed on case by case basis
Property: Properties in scope to be identified and programme needs to be strongly aligned to the Asset Management Plan
Procurement: Assessment to identify provider will not involve procurement process as unique commissioning brief will be developed on case by case basis to reflect individual needs of asset and the local community
Finance: condition surveys could highlight the need for front loaded budget to enable assets to be fit for transfer
Legal: suitable full repairing lease which reflects appropriate reviews and break clauses to protect interests of PCC and wider community

The implementation of the Strategy would have implications city-wide

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1
- A cross Directorate group have worked to develop the Strategy, ensuring a joined up strategic approach to community asset management.
 - Initial consultation will take place with members of Community Action Peterborough (CAP) who represent Community Associations across Peterborough who currently manage PCC Community Assets
 - Upon declaring an asset suitable for transfer, a community needs assessment would be expected to take place by any group expressing an interest in managing the asset.

8. NEXT STEPS

- 8.1 Refer to Cabinet for approval

9. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- 9.1 N/A

10. APPENDICES

- 10.1 Appendix 1 – Community Asset Transfer Strategy 2013 – 2017

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