

CABINET	AGENDA ITEM No. 4
23 SEPTEMBER 2013	PUBLIC REPORT

Cabinet Member(s) responsible:	Cllr David Seaton	
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COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER STRATEGY

R E C O M M E N D A T I O N S	
FROM: Sustainable Growth & Environmental Capital Scrutiny Committee	Deadline date : 23 September 2013
1. Approval and adoption of the Community Asset Transfer Strategy	

1. ORIGIN OF REPORT

1.1 This report is submitted to Cabinet following a request from Scrutiny Committee dated 5th September 2013.

2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT

2.1 The purpose of this report is to request approval on a proposed Community Asset Transfer Strategy.

2.2 This report is for Cabinet to consider under its Terms of Reference No. 3.2.9, To commission reviews by and determine any changes of policy proposed by the Scrutiny Committees and Commissions making recommendations to Council about proposed changes to the Council's major policy and budget framework.

3. TIMESCALE

Is this a Major Policy Item/Statutory Plan?	NO	If Yes, date for relevant Cabinet Meeting	
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4. Community Asset Transfer Policy

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.

4.2 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.

4.3 Peterborough's response to Localism

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. CONSULTATION

- A cross Directorate group have worked to develop the Strategy, ensuring a joined up strategic approach to community asset management.
- Initial consultation has taken 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.

6. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

The strategy will provide the council with the necessary fair and transparent policy framework for assessing and processing applications for the transfer of community assets to local community led groups

7. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

A policy framework is a necessity to support the live asset transfer procedures that are currently being explored by PCC. These cases involve the Gladstone Park Community Centre, which is anticipated to part of a dual management agreement with the new Gladstone Primary School currently being constructed on this site. In addition it will support the on-going assessment for the asset transfer of the 8 play centres that were identified for closure as a result of budget cuts effective April 2013. The strategy will then further support future transfer considerations.

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

Procurement procedures considered but rejected as too unnecessarily complex for community led groups. Procedures need to be accessible and achievable for local groups and explain clearly how applications will be assessed. This is a significant requirement if there are competing groups who express an interest in managing a community asset.

9. IMPLICATIONS

Discrimination & Equality: Equality Impact Assessments will be completed on a case by case basis.

Property: Properties in scope are to be identified and the programme will need to be robustly aligned to the Corporate Asset Management Plan.

Procurement: The assessment to identify a provider will not involve a procure process as a unique commissioning brief will be developed on a case by case basis to reflect individual needs of the asset and the local community.

Finance: condition surveys could highlight the need for a front loaded budget to enable asset to be fit for transfer.

Legal: suitable full repairing lease which reflects appropriate reviews and break clauses to protect the interests of PCC and the wider community.

10. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

N/A.

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