

COMMUNITY ASSETS TRANSFER PROGRAMME

1 CONTEXT

1.1 The challenging financial situation increasingly requires the Council to use to the full the assets available to help communities tackle the local issues of importance to them.

1.2 Since the publication of the Quirk report in 2007, councils and central government have seen greater community involvement in community assets and buildings as potentially delivering some or all of the following benefits:

(1) **Better community outcomes**- by releasing an organisation from its liabilities to the Council it can grow its work in the community. The Quirk Review noted that the crucial driver for asset transfer is not the disposal of assets per se but the empowerment of communities; any approach to community assets must therefore be seen in the context of the Council's aim to be an open and engaging Council that empowers communities and works in partnership with a range of public, private and voluntary organisations.

(2) **Better Value for Money** – cutting costs through new, localised ways of working and involvement of volunteers as well as drawing in more resources, for example from parish councils.

(3) **Greater support for our voluntary and community sector**- with opportunities for long-term planning by the community organisation involved in the building, including the ability to draw down external investment as well as greater freedom to tailor services to need. This support for local community organisations is urgent in the current climate and can make a real difference to long-run viability.

1.3 The new Community Right to Bid provides an additional focus for involvement in community assets, including those not in Council ownership.

2 COMMUNITY ASSETS IN BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET: SUGGESTED APPROACH

2.1 It is proposed that a programme begin of transferring Council community based assets and services to voluntary groups and parish councils, beginning with a series of "Quick Wins" alongside the development of a more detailed framework and criteria. "Transfer" is defined as "passing ownership or management of a building or piece of land from a public sector body to a third sector organisation". This may or may not involve transfer of the freehold and the most appropriate arrangements will be put in place depending on the nature of the asset and organisation concerned and the outcomes to be achieved.

3 COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER- “QUICK WINS”

3.1 To make progress on this issue, the Council will initially focus on finalising proposals for asset transfer where discussions are already well- advanced. These are set out in Table 1(below) and reflect the diversity of community organisations delivering services in our area, both in terms of structure and of the types of outcomes being achieved. However, each of these schemes has been built around:

- (1) An appropriate, not-for-profit legal entity, and governance structure to ensure effective management of the asset
- (2) Alignment between the work and objects of the organisations and the Council’s own Corporate Plan objectives.
- (3) Opportunities for enhancing the capacity of local voluntary and community organisations and empowering them to deliver their objects

3.2 As asset transfer terms are finalised with these organisations, the Council will also put in place arrangements to ensure that the wider community interest is safeguarded and that the overall objectives agreed will continue to be delivered in the longer term. The Council will consider impacts on its overall priority of enabling groups to grow their services in the community as well as the overall financial implications of proposals. The learning from this work will be used to develop the wider criteria for Community Asset Transfer set out in 4 below.

4 DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR ASSET TRANSFER

4.1 As well as progressing the “Quick Wins” identified in Table 1, the Council wishes to develop a wider offer to voluntary and community groups and parish councils in relation to community assets. A report will be brought to Cabinet recommending the process and criteria for this, building on experience from the work on the “Quick Wins”. It is expected that this report will be built around the following key principles

- (1) **Listening-** an open and transparent invitation to voluntary/community organisations and parish councils to propose changes to arrangements relating to community assets
- (2) **Prioritising-** being clear about the types of assets which will be considered for transfer
- (3) **Joining-Up-** checking the impact of proposals on other plans for assets, bringing services together to reduce costs and duplication where possible
- (4) **Working With You-** engaging constructively on proposals and encouraging phased approaches where practical

(5) **Sharing Ideas-** learning from successful schemes

- 4.2 In response to requests arising from this process, the Council will make positive suggestions including the potential for a phased approach and providing appropriate support to local groups.
- 4.3 Further work will be undertaken on more detailed criteria but the tests to be adopted will be proportionate to the degree of change in the relationship being proposed and the benefits to the community. The criteria will include appropriate safeguards to ensure that any asset is used in accordance with the objects agreed in any leasing arrangement, to ensure effective governance and to address any financial and value for money implications.
- 4.4 The Resources Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel intends to undertake a review of the Council's approach to community assets and a report is being presented to its meeting of March 18th. This will be linked to the proposals for policy development set out in this Appendix.

5 LINK WITH MEDIUM TERM SERVICE AND RESOURCE PLANNING

- 5.1 The Council and its partners hold a significant numbers of assets across our area. It is proposed that further work be undertaken to identify where costs can be reduced by removing duplication, for example, through colocation of services. The Council has in its Resources MTSRP a proposal to save £500k in 14/15 and an additional £500k in 15/16 through reviewing the use of Council owned assets. An analysis of 90 Council community assets suggests a total running cost of £7.5m, although since this includes service assets such as library and leisure facilities it is important to avoid double-counting.
- 5.2 Again, this work will be linked to the work being undertaken by the Resources Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel.

Table 1 - “Quick Wins”

NOTE: All proposals below will contribute to the following outcomes through the process of asset transfer:

- Where local people actively lead the delivery of improvements in their community
- Where decisions are made as locally as possible
- Where there is easy access to public services and local amenities
- People have developed their skills and used them to improve their community

Asset	Summary of outcomes provided by the organisation	Corporate Plan Outcomes directly delivered
Percy Community Centre – New King Street, Bath	A well-maintained, accessible community resource for other voluntary sector and community groups and to support the economic activities of individuals with a range of services. The Centre now has over 50,000 users a year and hosts a regular schedule of around 25 different activities each week.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The people most in need are supported to live full active lives • Children and young people enjoy their childhood and are prepared for adult life • There are activities and opportunities to help young people to make a positive difference to their lives and communities • Everyone has the opportunity to participate in sports, leisure and cultural activities • Reduced inequality between communities across Bath & North East Somerset
Chapel Arts Centre, St James Memorial Hall, Bath	A community & culturally based arts centre presenting a wide range of the performing arts, including music), theatre, dance, comedy, film, mime, poetry and multimedia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone has the opportunity to participate in sports, leisure and cultural activities
Whisty Community Centre, Stoneable Rd	The Whisty community Association provides community facilities and services tailored to meet local needs in Whitelands Springfield and Tynning. It works with statutory authorities, schools, colleges and voluntary organisations to improve the quality of life of the inhabitants of the WHISTY area. Services available include a pre-school playgroup and parent toddler group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The people most in need are supported to live full active lives. • Children and young people enjoy their childhood and are prepared for adult life • Everyone has the opportunity to participate in sports, leisure and cultural activities • Reduced inequality between communities across Bath & North East Somerset

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<p>Fairfield House, Bath</p>	<p>The Friends of Haile Selassie I Fairfield House has been established with clear objects relating to respecting and preserving its heritage and its legacy for the older people of Bath as for different community groups intended by HIM Haile Selassie 1 bequest as well as developing Fairfield House as a sacred space. It is in the process of preparing an appropriate legal entity and Business Plan.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The people most in need are supported to live full active lives. • Older people are supported to live independently • Everyone has the opportunity to participate in sports, leisure and cultural activities
<p>Midsomer Norton Railway Station</p>	<p>The Somerset & Dorset Railway Heritage Trust operates a heritage railway from its station at Midsomer Norton and is currently extending its operation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are activities and opportunities to help young people to make a positive difference to their lives and communities. • Everyone has the opportunity to participate in sports, leisure and cultural activities
<p>YMCA Broad St, Bath</p>	<p>Bath YMCA is an autonomous charity that affiliates to YMCA England. It has its own board of management made up of representatives from local communities. As well as accommodation, the organisation provides a wide range of other services including breakfast clubs, after school clubs, childcare and youth projects.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The people most in need are supported to live full active lives • Children and young people enjoy their childhood and are prepared for adult life • There are activities and opportunities to help young people to make a positive difference to their lives and communities • Everyone has the opportunity to participate in sports, leisure and cultural activities
<p>Genesis Trust, James St West, Bath</p>	<p>A charity in Bath that currently runs a range of to help the homeless and vulnerable in the city. These include a furniture project, Foodbank and the Street Pastors scheme.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The people most in need are supported to live full active lives. • Where people feel safe • Reduced inequality between communities across Bath & North East Somerset

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<p>Scouts, Kelston Rd</p>	<p>The aim of The Scout Association is to "promote the development of young people in achieving their full physical, intellectual, social and spiritual potential, as individuals, as responsible citizens and as members of their local, national and international communities". It achieves this through a programme of activities for young people from the ages of 6 to 25.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The people most in need are supported to live full active lives • Children and young people enjoy their childhood and are prepared for adult life • There are activities and opportunities to help young people to make a positive difference to their lives and communities • Everyone has the opportunity to participate in sports, leisure and cultural activities
<p>Beacon Hall/Beacon Field, Peasedown St John</p>	<p>This purpose-built Hall and nearby children's play area, were provided for the village of Peasedown St John as a result of the construction of over 1000 new homes in the village. The site of the Hall and its surrounding gardens, Beacon Field and car park is now leased to Peasedown St John Parish Council by Bath & North East Somerset Council.</p> <p>This will bring benefits to the Hall and the management of the adjacent space.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The people most in need are supported to live full active lives • Children and young people enjoy their childhood and are prepared for adult life • Everyone has the opportunity to participate in sports, leisure and cultural activities • Clean streets and open spaces
<p>Midsomer Norton Town Trust</p>	<p>A new Midsomer Norton Town Trust has been established to hold the leases for buildings in trust for the town, be responsible for maintaining the fabric of the buildings and to develop a capital sinking fund over time to cover the cost of repairs. The 11 Town Councillors will be the trustees. The Midsomer Norton Community Trust will be a Community Interest Company responsible for running the Town Hall and Orchard Hall buildings on a daily basis.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean streets and open spaces • The quality of the environment is maintained or enhanced