

Community Asset Transfer – Angus Council Assessment Model

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Community Bodies can apply to the Council to buy, lease or have other rights over Council assets. As such CAT applications are likely to be vary in their scale and nature so the method of assessing each application needs to be robust, fair but also flexible.
- 1.2 Although the starting point for requests to buy or lease a Council asset is that market value will be paid it is likely that in many cases the community body will seek a discount (potentially a substantial one) as part of their application. Community bodies must justify any application which seeks a discount against market value on the basis of the other benefits their proposal will deliver. Therefore for the Council to meet its best value statutory duties its method of assessing CAT applications needs to take into account financial and non-financial factors.
- 1.3 Scottish Government guidance on assessing CAT applications advises that when the price offered in an asset transfer request is less than the market value the relevant authority will need to consider whether the proposed benefits to be delivered by the community transfer body justify the proposed discount. The benefits of the request should be proportionate to the value of the asset and the level of discount, with an appropriate level of information to support the application. Any decision to transfer an asset must represent good use of public resources.

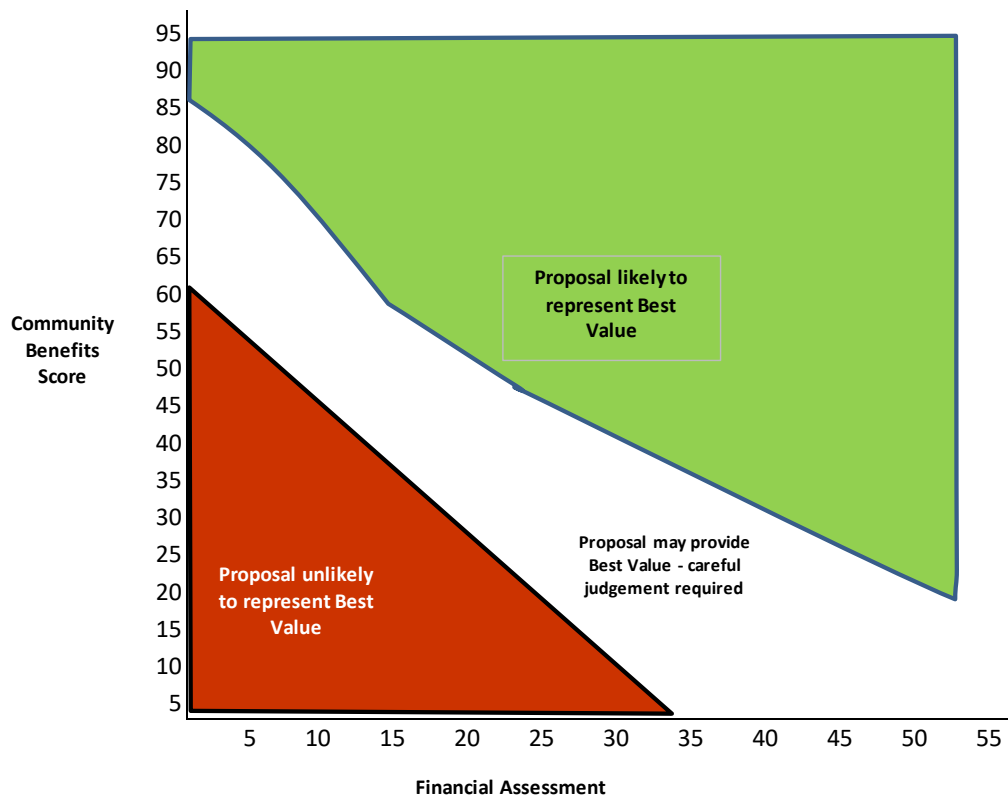
2. ASSESSMENT PROCESS & REPORTING TO MEMBERS

- 2.1 It is proposed that the officers from various services of the Council who make up the Community Asset Transfer Group (CATG) continue to be responsible for assessing CAT applications. The CATG will assess all CAT applications to buy, lease or have other rights over Council assets using the criteria and model described in Section 3 below. Officers will assess/score individually with these results aggregated to allow a recommendation to be made to elected members.
- 2.2 CAT applications and recommendations thereon will be submitted to the Policy & Resources Committee. No CAT applications will be approved by officers under delegated authority.

3. ANGUS COUNCIL ASSESSMENT MODEL

- 3.1 In assessing CAT applications the Council must consider how they will promote or improve economic development; regeneration; public health; social wellbeing; environmental wellbeing or whether agreeing to the request would be likely to reduce socio-economic inequalities or bring other benefits. The Council should also have regard to best value themes on vision & leadership, governance and accountability, etc. The Council should also consider the extent to which a CAT application contributes towards local and national outcomes and priorities.
- 3.2 Taking these requirements into account alongside assessing the financial impact (positive or negative) for the Council the proposed assessment model for Angus has 10 criteria covering community benefits and best value and 6 criteria covering financial impact.
- 3.3 A score out of 4 on the financial assessment and 5 on the community benefit assessment for each of the criteria is given based on the extent to which the CAT application and what it proposes would e.g. deliver benefit or meet best value requirements or impact on the Council's finances. Some criteria (those considered most important) are given an extra weighting in the scoring. Community benefits are scored out of a maximum of 90 and financial impact is scored out of 52.

- 3.4 The scores from each of these assessments is plotted onto a best value assessment graph to act as a guide for making recommendations to members. The calibration of the graph is key. CAT applications which bring limited community benefits and have a mostly negative impact on the Council’s finances are unlikely to represent best value and therefore would be recommended for refusal. The assessment model and graph is designed to ensure that most CAT applications which have significant community benefits will be recommended for approval unless they have a significantly negative impact on the Council’s finances. In those situations the best value judgement will be more finely balanced.
- 3.5 Annex A attached shows the assessment criteria and scoring grid. Additional guidance for CATG officers is being developed to give clarity of what is being sought under each criteria and to ensure consistency in approach in using the assessment model. The best value assessment graph is shown below.



- 3.6 Using the assessment graph above gives the CATG and ultimately councillors a consistent and fair means of assessing both the non-financial and financial aspects of CAT applications in a manner which is consistent with best value requirements, takes account of Scottish Government guidance and allows fine judgements to be made.
- 3.7 Applying the graph would mean the following based on examples scores:-

Community Benefit Score (out of 90)	Financial Assessment Score (out of 52)	Placing
60	25	Green area – likely gives Best Value
75	10	Green area – likely gives Best Value
35	15	Red area – unlikely gives Best Value
40	10	Red area – unlikely gives Best Value
65	10	White area – fine judgement required
35	20	White area – fine judgement required
30	30	White area – fine judgement required

- 3.8 No assessment model can be perfect in all scenarios and the outcomes from using the scoring grid and best value graph should therefore be regarded as a guide to decisions. Ultimately elected members will have to make the decision on whether to approve a CAT application taking into account the benefits it could bring and the impact this has on the Council's finances. The assessment model recommended for adoption in this Appendix may require refinement in light of experience of applying it in practice.