

ANGUS COUNCIL

POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 26 SEPTEMBER 2019

COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER – 2018/19 ANNUAL REPORT

REPORT BY IAN LORIMER, DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

ABSTRACT

This report presents the Angus Council Annual Report on Community Asset Transfer activities in Angus covering the 2018/19 financial year.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 It is recommended that the Committee:-

- a. note the requirements of the legislation as outlined in this report;
- b. note the summary of activity described in Section 4 and Appendix 1;
- c. note the significant draw on officer time the new legislation is resulting in and the challenges this brings in an environment of restricted staff resources; and
- d. approve publication of this report on the Community Asset Transfer pages of the Council's website.

2. ALIGNMENT TO THE ANGUS LOCAL OUTCOMES IMPROVEMENT PLAN (LOIP) AND COUNCIL PLAN

2.1 This report contributes to the outcomes outlined in the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan, Locality Plans and Council Plan, which focus on the economy, people and place. Community Asset Transfer is a core part of Community Empowerment and it is important that the Council support community groups in a manner which delivers best value.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 introduces a right for community bodies to make requests to all local authorities, Scottish Ministers and a wide-ranging list of public bodies, for any land or buildings they feel they could make better use of. Community bodies can request ownership, lease or other rights, as they wish through a process known as Community Asset Transfer (CAT). The Act requires those public authorities to assess requests transparently against specific criteria, and to agree the request unless there are reasonable grounds for refusal.

3.2 Section 95 of the Act requires every relevant authority to publish an Annual Report setting out the numbers of asset transfer requests received and their outcomes and anything the relevant authority has done to promote the use of asset transfer and support community transfer bodies to make requests.

4. ACTIVITY DURING 2018/19

4.1 Appendix 1 provides information on CAT activity in Angus for 2018/19 in line with the requirements of the Act. This is mostly statistical information on the number of applications received and what has happened to them together with details of the assets and community bodies involved for those applications approved.

Promotion & Support Activity

- 4.2 Angus Council has completed its' second full year determining CAT applications under the new legislation.

During this year the post of Community Empowerment Support Officer was successfully recruited to by internal secondment in July 2019 after two failed external recruitment exercises. It has been necessary to appoint this officer given the significant volume of new work CAT and other aspects of the Community Empowerment legislation have resulted in. This post is funded for 2 years only.

This post provides a dedicated point of contact for community bodies; officers and members of the public as well as dealing with the extensive administrative requirements associated with CAT applications. There continues to be significant interest in CAT by community bodies across Angus which is positive and to be welcomed but this does put pressure on limited staff resources.

- 4.3 It has proved difficult to develop and dedicate time to promotional activities during 2018/19 due to the Community Empowerment Support Officer post not being filled until July 2019, however despite this all enquiries and applications were dealt with in accordance with timescales set out by legislation and community bodies have been supported through local communities officers. The following activities to promote and support CAT by community bodies across Angus are worthy of note:-

- Through local promotion via Community Officers, groups have been actively involved in discussions regarding CATs;
- Common Good guidelines have been drafted following updated legislation;
- A list of Council assets eligible for CAT applications is available on the Council website in a number of downloadable formats and this is updated at least quarterly;
- Meetings with community councils were arranged to raise awareness and discuss issues;
- Meetings with senior officers, site visits, etc. have also been arranged to support community groups with CAT enquiries and applications;
- Following an internal audit the following year all actions were completed and closed off.

- 4.4 As can be seen in Appendix 1 community bodies in the Angus Council area continue to take a strong interest in CAT as a potential option to be explored.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no additional financial implications for the Council arising from the recommendations in this report. All CAT applications are processed in accordance with the Council's policies and assessment model and any financial implications are considered as part of that process.

NOTE: The background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) which were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report are:

- Report 105/18 – Community Asset Transfer Policy Development & Applications Update Report

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