

ANGUS COUNCIL

POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 27 October 2020

COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER – 2019/20 ANNUAL REPORT

REPORT BY JACKIE BUCHANAN, DIRECTOR OF LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

ABSTRACT

This report presents the Angus Council Annual Report on Community Asset Transfer activities by Angus Council covering the 2019/2020 financial year.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 It is recommended that the Committee:-

- a. notes the requirements of the legislation as outlined in this report;
- b. notes the summary of activity described in Section 4 and the Appendix to this report;
- c. notes that a significant staff resource across different services is required in order to implement the requirements of the legislation and facilitate CAT transfers;
- d. approves publication of this report and Appendix on the Community Asset Transfer pages of the Council's website for 2019/20; and
- e. approves delegated authority as described in Section 3.3 for future annual reports.

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 ("the Act") 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.

3.3 Members are asked to approve delegated powers to the Director of Legal and Democratic Services to allow annual publication of the CAT Annual Report on the council's website. This would enable the annual report to be submitted to members as an "information only" report.

4. ACTIVITY DURING 2019/20

4.1 Jackie Buchanan, Director of Legal & Democratic Services replaced Ian Lorimer, Director of Finance as Chair of the CAT Group from August 2020.

4.2 The Appendix provides information on CAT activity in Angus for 2019/20 in accordance with the requirements of the Act. This is mostly statistical information on the number of applications received and what has happened to them. Members should note that Table 1 provides details of those applications received but does not include work in progress on CAT applications during 2019/20 that were validated in the previous year. This detail is provided in Table 3 and relates to Strathmore Rugby Club and Phoenix Gymnastics which are currently being progressed.

Support & Promotion

4.7 The Council has a range of proactive measures in place to promote and assist groups through the process. The following activities to promote and support community bodies across Angus are worthy of note:-

- Employment of Community Empowerment Support Office together with continued support from the CAT Group.
- Detailed Guidance available on www.angus.gov.uk
- Working procedures are regularly updated considering learning from previous applications
- Through local promotion via Community Officers, groups have been actively involved in open meetings and discussions regarding potential CATs
- Meetings with senior officers, site visits, etc. have also been arranged to support community groups with CAT enquiries and applications
- A list of Council assets is available on the Council website in several downloadable formats and this is updated at least quarterly

4.8 All enquiries and applications continue to be dealt with, as far as possible, in accordance with timescales set out by legislation. These have been impacted to an extent by challenges and restrictions of COVID. Community bodies continue to be supported through local communities' officers.

4.9 As can be seen in the Appendix, community bodies in the Angus Council area continue to take a strong interest in CATs 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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Appendix: Summary of Activity