

Extending the Co-operative Approach to the Use of Council Asset Policy – Terms of Reference

Further to the report approved by Cabinet on 25 March 2019 to amend the Council's current co-operative approach to the use of Council Assets (CAUCA), it is proposed to establish an Overview and Scrutiny Board Task and Finish Group to investigate the nature and extent of support available to community groups seeking to acquire the use of Council owned assets to promote community initiatives.

This might include the following:

- Help, advice and support through the various stages of entering into a licensing or leasing arrangement for the use of a Council asset.
- Help, advice and support in entering into an agreement to agree a lease subject to funding being made available through the grant system.
- Support in the development of a business plan to ensure that the proposal to acquire a facility is viable, sustainable, achievable and that there is sufficient voluntary support available and that there is sufficient voluntary support available now and in the future.
- Help to prepare applications for funding which may require some training and preparation.
- Help in addressing issues relating to, for example, VAT and other financial aspects of any business transaction which may not be readily understood by volunteers lacking experience of business or finance.
- Consideration as to whether sharing costs for cleaning and other services which may produce economies of scale and reduce overheads for voluntary groups.

It is proposed to consider whether the Council should establish a small unit of officers / members to support community asset transfer. The voluntary sector is an important partner who can assist in the development of many local services, activities, events, etc., which need a community hub and can help to promote social inclusion, social cohesion, tackle loneliness and support those residents suffering from dementia/Alzheimer's disease as well as their carers.

Whilst there are Council officers who can support this process, there is no obvious flow diagram that would enable representatives of voluntary groups to 'find a way through the system' who can provide advice but who are not in a position to provide practical help.

Whilst Action Together may be able to offer some support, it is evident that there is insufficient overall support in the system to enable the policy for Community Asset transfer to work efficiently and effectively.

The purpose of the Task and Finish Group is to consider how this situation might be addressed.