

Report to: Operations Committee

Meeting Date: 21st October 2014
Agenda Item: 11
Prepared By: Cllr Neil Forbes
Lead Member – Asset Transfer WG



Subject: Asset Transfer

Background

The working group [WG] has met twice, noted its Terms of Reference [ToR] and appointed Cllr Forbes as lead member.

Cllrs Forbes gave a background to the previous work on Asset Transfer around 5 years ago. It was highlighted that it is important to keep the process moving or risk wallowing in the lack of resource from CEC.

It was noted that St John's Wood Community Centre was not to be transferred owing to the changes as reported at Ops. A separate working group is investigating the asset transfer of the Council Offices. The Town Clerk and Cllr Goodrich were investigating the transfer of the former Taxi Office for CAB use.

The following **criteria** were established to guide initial decisions on the potential assets.

- 1) If the town lost the asset, would we be bothered?
- 2) Can we deliver a better service / facility?
- 3) How does it feel cost-wise?

Parks and Play Areas

The working group used Vickers Way Park in Northwich as an example of a traditional park with a wide offering for the community and considered that parks are more than just a play area for young children.

An historic report by Cllr B Coan highlighted the following play areas for transfer; Longridge (jnct w/ Mobberley Road), Manor Crescent, Southfields/Shaw Drive and the Moor. Other areas to be considered were North Downs, Longridge (former skate park), St Helena's, Longridge (jnct w/ Higher Downs), Mobberley Road (adjacent to Dog Lodge), Shaw Heath, Manor Park and the Barncroft.

It is believed Council had resolved not to transfer the Moor for the foreseeable future.

Taking all into account the WG prioritised them for transfer:

- A – Seek to transfer
- B- Consider transfer after priority A
- C- Low priority; asses if change in circumstances

A general principle was agreed that if local residents wanted a play area it would be assigned higher priority.

A - Seek to Transfer	B - Not Transfer at present	C - Consider in future
St Helena / North Downs	Manor Crescent	Barncroft
Ashworth Park	Mobberley Road	Southfields

Priority A areas were regarded as high priority with the working group having identified key benefits to the surrounding residents of some form of park being redeveloped at the site.

Priority B areas were regarded as offering good potential to create a quality park in the future but with the residents' needs potentially being met by other facilities close by.

Priority C areas were regarded as sufficient at present but would be considered if there was a substantial decline in standard or the areas were at risk of being lost to the public. I

WG Recommendations (1-4):

- 1) That the committee recommend to Council to request the transfer of those in Priority A, subject to business case
- 2) That the committee recommend to Council that Priority B parks are considered, dependent upon the thoughts of local residents, after the Priority A transfers.
- 3) That the Priority C parks are monitored for the time being.
- 4) That no further action is taken with regards all other historical play areas

Booths Garden (Priority A)

The WG believes that the Council could deliver a substantial improvement to the Booths garden area creating a relaxing open space for both nearby residents (including residential supported housing) and workers in the town seeking quiet place to rest.

Recommendation (5):

- 5) That the committee recommend to Council to request the transfer of Booths Garden subject to business case.

Car Parks (Priority A)

The WG discussed and agreed that it would be unlikely that CEC would transfer them all. However, agreed that seeking the transfer of **Silk Mill St Car Park** should be pursued with a view that it could provide the Town Council:

- Guaranteed future of outdoor market (currently an area is licensed)
- Expansion opportunity for the outdoor market
- Control over parking fees, potentially making it free parking on market days
- Useful town centre events space

Recommendation (6):

- 6) That the committee recommend to Council to request the transfer of Silk Mill Street Car Park subject to business case.

Taxi Office (Priority B)

Recommendation (7):

- 7) That the committee reassess the transfer of the Taxi Office after priority A transfers; with its potential for a positive community space but the previous pressing need of finding CAB a new office has been met by CEC offering them this location; to be reviewed if costs to CAB service (itself funded by KTC from January 2015) are substantially higher than expected.

Bus Shelters (*Priority C*)

A low priority transfer, whilst it could offer some benefits to the town they were not substantially high enough at present time. **Recommendation** is to take no action.

Recommendation (8):

- 8) That no action is taken.

Other Assets

Using the assessing criteria, St Johns Churchyard, the Library, Bus Station and Woodland near the Moor were all considered and discounted by the WG.

Recommendation (9):

- 9) That the transfer of these assets is not pursued unless matters significantly change.

All other assets currently owned by Cheshire East Council and not covered by this report were not considered to offer the Town Council or the town any significant benefits through transfer.

Decisions Required

The committee should consider the report and the eight recommendations contained therein.