

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Scrutiny Committee

Date: 30th October 2013

Report for: Information

Report of: Executive Member for Economic Growth and Prosperity

Report Title

Community Asset Framework

Summary

The report summarises the approach to implementation set out in the previous report to the Scrutiny Topic Group and the report approved at Executive on the 24th June 2013.

Recommendation(s)

To note the contents of this report and progress made to date.

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

Name: Andy Prideaux, Head of Property and Development

Extension: 4264

Attachments:

Appendix i Rent Grant Questionnaire

Appendix ii Update list of Council property assets

Appendix iii Revised Community Right to Bid procedure

1.0 Background

1.1. Following the Scrutiny Topic Group meeting on 16th May 2013, the draft Community Asset Report was approved at the Executive meeting on 24th June 2013. Since then Officers have been implementing the agreed proposals and progress to date is detailed below. The programme of work is now in the implementation stage and the first tranche of agreements are progressing well.

2.0 Rent Grant Review

- 2.1 All Rent Grants (26 in total) awarded by the Council have been identified, and a questionnaire (copy attached) is currently being sent to groups / organisations currently receiving a rent grant. Groups will be asked to respond promptly to the questionnaire and it is proposed that 4 weeks should be sufficient for this. Once all questionnaires are returned, a summary will be prepared with recommendations regarding the future of rent grant awards to organisations.

3.0 Staff Resourcing

- 3.1 A recommendation made by the Scrutiny Topic Group concerned consideration of the necessary staff resourcing required to carry out negotiations for regularising property agreements, and whether there were sufficient resources in place to carry out the review.
- 3.2 Resourcing arrangements for the Asset Strategy are currently being reviewed and if necessary a business case will be put together regarding the possible employment of additional staff on fixed term contracts to assist with regularising the property agreements. Once the negotiations and the relevant documentation is completed, less officer time will be needed to oversee these properties.
- 3.3 The project plan indicated that the programme should be completed by the end of March 2015 and this is still the intention.

4.0 Exceptions policy

- 4.1 Whilst it is the intention that Voluntary and Community groups will accept responsibility for the running and maintenance costs of the buildings they occupy, it is accepted that there will be groups who will not be able to enter into such agreements.
- 4.2 Each case is being looked at individually, and where appropriate and subject to approval, exceptions may be made whereby the Council retain liability for repairs or other associated costs. This would be subject to the occupier making a contribution based on their ability to fund. Other options such as "tapering" the costs of repairs over several years will also be considered.

5.0 Regularising voluntary and community sector agreements

- 5.1 An updated list of property assets occupied by sports clubs, community and voluntary organisations, allotments societies and charities is attached to this report.
- 5.2 The indicative timescales for consideration of transfers/regularising agreements in the original Council Asset Strategy report suggested that buildings where agreements are in place, but the occupants are holding over, would be prioritised. However, after further review of the risks and issues, officers recommend that negotiations should be prioritised for buildings that incur considerable running costs (maintenance / repairs / rates and utility costs) in

order to minimise budget pressures. The properties highlighted with a 1 in appendix (ii) will be prioritised first.

- 5.3 Where more than one group is based in a property, the occupiers have been listed and split to highlight the number of agreements that need to be reviewed / negotiated.
- 5.4 The audit of Council premises as part of the move to Corporate Landlord may result in the identification of further agreements that will need to be negotiated and, therefore, added to the property asset list.
- 5.5 The Community Asset Policy will be reviewed in January 2014 to evaluate its effectiveness, and the intention is that all agreements will be in place by March 2015.
- 5.6 Whilst some agreements have been satisfactorily concluded, it should be borne in mind that other negotiations still in progress may prove sensitive or difficult, due to the expectations placed on groups to accept responsibility for running costs and maintenance.
- 5.7 As part of the review process, the purposes for which the premises are being used will be checked. All new agreements will contain provisions to restrict these uses to those approved by Trafford Council ensuring that they are properly governed.

6.0 Negotiations in progress

The following are examples of on-going negotiations:-

- 6.1 Davyhulme Youth Centre – discussions are being held with an interested party, “Away Days”, who are looking to take over the building but will continue to allow the Youth Service to occupy the premises.
- 6.2 Sale West Development / Community Centre – discussions are being held about the possible Community Asset / Transfer of the property. A feasibility study for the centre has recently been completed and options are:
 - § To do minimal works
 - § Carry out a full refurbishment of the existing building
 - § Build a new community centre although funding has not yet been identified for this.

 - § If the decision is made to go with the latter option then the transfer will not be completed within the timeframe included in the project plan.
- 6.3 Partington Youth Centre – research is being carried out by Pulse Generation (Part of Thrive Trafford) about the proposed transfer of the building to be used for Social Enterprises within the Partington area.
- 6.4 Broome House – this property is currently occupied by Blusci and a meeting has been arranged in late October to discuss the potential of the premises.

- 6.5 Shawe Hall Community Centre – Legal have been instructed to complete a lease renewal to the community association for this property.
- 6.6 Ashton Park – Officers have met with local Ward Councillors to discuss the possibility of the transfer of the pavilions and bowling greens in the park. Running costs have been provided for the Friends of Ashton Park to consider.
- 6.7 Delamere Toy Library – terms for a 2-year lease, amending the existing lease arrangements have been put forward to the tenants. There are issues with trying to get the tenant to pay for all utility costs for the premises.
- 6.8 Dawlish Road Scout Hut – Negotiations are complete and instructions are being prepared for Legal Services.
- 6.9 Urmston Library – meeting to be held with Citizens Advice, Trafford about a lease of part of the premises, which is to include a contribution towards running costs.
- 6.10 Walkden Gardens Scout Hut – discussions being held with the tenant regarding a proposed change of use for the premises.
- 6.11 Leisure Trust – the properties leased and managed by the Trafford Community Leisure Trust are currently being reviewed separately and have, therefore, not been considered as part of this report.
- 6.12 Allotments – there are a number of allotments within Trafford that are managed by Trafford Council's Allotment Officer. The rents received from the tenants of the managed allotments more than cover the maintenance and running costs of the sites and it is proposed that the Council continue with this arrangement and will review it every 12 months.

7.0 Negotiations Completed

7.1 Bowfell House

7.2 73 Chapel Road

7.3 13 Washway Road

7.4 Park House

These properties were included in the original property list providing accommodation for voluntary organisations. The properties have been declared surplus and are listed in the Land Sales Programme for disposal. The voluntary organisations currently occupying Bowfell House and Park House are moving into private accommodation. Citizens Advice Trafford, who occupy both 73 Chapel Road and 13 Washway Road are moving into Sale Waterside and a requirement to complete an agreement for their occupation at Waterside has been added to the original list, which was attached to the June Executive Report..

8.0 Equality & Diversity Impact Assessments

- 8.1 An analysis of those premises and groups whose activities and changes to the agreements may have an impact on equalities is being carried out. An appropriate Equalities Impact Assessment will be carried out where appropriate, reflecting the individual circumstances of those groups and their activities

9.0 Community Right to Bid Update

- 9.1 The Community Right to Bid procedure has been adjusted to provide for more member involvement. This has been approved by the Executive Member for EGP, in conjunction with the Corporate Director for EGP and the Director of Legal and Democratic Services under delegated authority. A copy of the procedure is attached as appendix (iii).
- 9.2 Since the first nomination, there have been several enquiries received from members of the public about making a nomination of a property but no formal applications have been received.

Consultation

Ward members are consulted on individual cases and, where appropriate, the views of the Local Community Groups such as Thrive, Pulse and BluSci are also sought on the overarching strategy. These groups are supportive and consideration is being given to how they can be involved on the process.

In addition, the relevant service areas within the Council have also been consulted.

Reasons for Recommendation(s)

To ensure that Scrutiny Committee is kept up to date with progress in relation to the programme for Community Assets which was approved by the Executive in June 2013.