

**BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**REPORT TO TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCIL FORUM**  
**12 SEPTEMBER 2016**

**REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR COMMUNITIES**

**COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER UPDATE**

**1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Town and Community Councils on Community Asset Transfer (CAT).

**2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Plan and other Corporate Priority**

- 2.1 Helping people to be more self-reliant: Taking early steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services.
- 2.2 Supporting a successful economy: Showing any links to sustainable jobs and growth.
- 2.3 Smarter use of resources: Ensuring that all our resources (financial, physical, human and technological) are used as effectively and as efficiently as possible and supporting the development of resources throughout the community that can help deliver our aims.

**3. Background**

- 3.1 In July 2015 Cabinet approved a proposal to improve the pace and extend the number of community asset transfers within the County Borough. This was further supported by the refreshing of the Asset Management Plan 2021, in line with Welsh Government Best Practice Guide. The Forum was made aware of this in a report presented on 21st September 2015.
- 3.2 In October 2015 two letters were sent to Town and Community Councils outlining the CAT priorities, which were based on the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) proposals and include, in phase 1, Public Toilets, Parks Pavilions, Bus Shelters and Community Centres. Future phases will include Playgrounds, Playing fields and Bowling Greens followed by Miscellaneous Assets.
- 3.3 The letters set out the protocol that needed to be followed in phases to successfully complete a CAT.
- 3.4 In January 2016 the Forum received an update on progress on CAT which included the information that a CAT Officer had been appointed in November 2015 whose role was to support groups through the CAT application process. The Forum was also made aware that for the Rural Development wards in Bridgend that further support including the potential of grant funding could be available to transfer assets and to look at ways of providing non statutory services.

## 4. Current Situation

- 4.1 There has been a significant amount of interest in CAT from local clubs and organisations, including Town and Community Councils. Up until 17<sup>th</sup> August 2016 56 organisations had approached the CAT officer with 18 applications progressing to the business planning stage. Of these:
- 2 applications have been withdrawn
  - 9 applications are live and are developing their business case
  - 6 applications are dormant
  - 1 application is being dealt with by the Property Section
- 4.2 Interest to date has included 26 enquiries for pavilions, 8 for community centres, 2 for toilets and 1 application for a number of bus stops. Where interest for the same asset has been from different organisations they have been encouraged to work together. There has been interest in assets which are not currently on the list and a few organisations have shown interest in CAT in Bridgend as they need a building in the area, but not focused on a specific asset.
- 4.3 The applications are predominantly being made by sports clubs and associations in relation to self-management of pavilions, but many of the clubs are keen to explore, at this stage, inclusion of playing fields.
- 4.4 Three Town and Community Councils are progressing applications for various amenities including public toilets, pavilions, bus shelters and community centres.
- 4.5 The CAT process has been designed to test an organisation's capacity and the robustness of its business and financial case.
- 4.6 The Rural Development Programme recently commissioned a report compiled by Wales Cooperative Centre (WCC), which has studied the CAT process in Bridgend County Borough Council to date and made a series of recommendations to improve the CAT process, which are due to be considered by Cabinet in October 2016.
- 4.7 However, one recommendation from the WCC report that has already been progressed relates to providing additional support to interested groups and organisations to help them through the CAT process. Bridgend County Borough Council has commissioned independent support to provide detailed advice and guidance to CAT applicants on issues to include:
- Options appraisals and feasibility studies
  - Business and financial planning
  - Legal structures and governance arrangements
  - All aspects of asset management
  - Partnership/consortia working
- 4.8 It is anticipated that the support package will be in place from October 2016 until March 2019 and the Forum will be made aware of how this can be accessed once it is established.

## 4.9 Funding of Community Asset Transfers

- 4.9.1 The Forum has been informed previously that the £50k per annum capital allocation, reserved for bids from Town and Community Councils, had been increased to £100k per annum between 2016-17 and 2018-19, funded from the Change Fund Earmarked Reserve, and that this fund was now to be refocused to support, as a priority, CAT related applications.
- 4.9.2 Cabinet approved a report on the 7<sup>th</sup> June 2016 supporting seven submissions and allocated total funding of £83k of the available £92k for 2016-17 from the Town and Community Council Capital Fund (£7.5k of the 2016-17 allocation of £100k had already been allocated in 15-16 due to the amount available being oversubscribed). There is £9.5k unallocated from 2016-17 which will be carried over to 2017-18 if no decision to allocate the funding in the current financial year is taken.
- 4.9.3 It was anticipated that from 2016-17 that this fund would only support CAT related projects. However, it became apparent that the first year of these new arrangements would need to also approve the more traditional projects due to the timing of the submissions, which in some cases pre dated this change of emphasis.
- 4.9.4 It is intended from 2017-18 that the Town and Community Council Capital Fund be aligned more closely to the CAT process and that applications for support would initially be assessed by the Communities Directorate before approval by Cabinet. The Communities Directorate hosts a cross authority CAT Steering Group which considers and determines successful CAT applications made through the Business Planning process.
- 4.9.5 The Forum have been informed that any requests for CAT transition revenue funding would be considered by the Council's Programme Management Board (PMB) and if successful then time limited funding should be provided from the Change Management Ear Marked reserve subject to a satisfactory business case and affordability. There have been no applications for CAT Revenue Transition Funding to date.
- 4.9.6 In 2013-14 the Council approved a capital allocation of £1 million of funding from the Council's Capital Programme to provide capital investment to refurbish and improve the Council's sports pavilions. This funding is prioritised where it is proposed to transfer the asset through the CAT process. The purpose of this investment is to invest in the buildings to address the maintenance backlog and to provide incentive for community groups to take on the management of the facilities.
- 4.9.7 There has, to this point, been one successful application from a group who are a user of a pavilion to access funding from the Council's Capital Fund of £1m towards refurbishment of a pavilion, subject to compliance with certain conditions. The money will be granted on production of a robust business plan and evidence that the other conditions have been satisfactorily met.
- 4.10 The Parks Department are currently undertaking a Strategic Review of parks and playing fields which will inform the strategy for future provision, taking into account the likely budget position moving forward, and this in turn will impact on how CAT is implemented. It is inevitable that the findings and recommendations that arise from

this work will impact on timescales and implementation dates for issues such as charging policies and any potential closure of buildings.

## **5. Effect upon Policy Framework and Procedure Rules**

5.1 There is no effect upon the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules

## **6. Equality Impact Assessment**

6.1 An EIA for asset transfers will be prepared as appropriate

## **7. Financial Implications**

7.1 There are a number of capital and revenue streams of funding available to support CAT, as outlined in the report.

## **8. Recommendations**

8.1 That the Town and Community Council Forum note the progress on Community Asset Transfer as outlined in the report.

**Mark Shephard**

**CORPORATE DIRECTOR - COMMUNITIES**

**September 2016**

Contact Officer: Sue Whittaker,  
Skills and Sustainable Development Manager

Telephone No: 01656 815324

E-mail: [Sue.Whittaker@Bridgend.gov.uk](mailto:Sue.Whittaker@Bridgend.gov.uk)

### **Background documents:**

Cabinet Report July 2015

Town and Community Council Report September 2015

Town and Community Council Report January 2016

Cabinet Report June 2016