

<b>Key Decision Required</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>In the Forward Plan</b>	<b>No</b>
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## CABINET

**10 NOVEMBER 2017**

### REFERENCE REPORT FROM THE CORPORATE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

#### **A.7 ASSETS UPDATE**

(Report prepared by Anastasia Simpson and Katie Sullivan)

#### **BACKGROUND**

At the meeting of the Corporate Management Committee held on 16 October 2017, the Council's Head of Property Services (Andy White) gave the Committee a presentation on Asset Management. The presentation covered the following:

- (a) The Asset Management Team and what they do;
- (b) Properties and policies; and where to find information;
- (c) Our mission: "Generate and increase revenue" and how to do it;
- (d) Ongoing projects, acquisitions and disposals; and
- (e) Financial changes over 10 years and how to respond;

Members were given the opportunity to make suggestions and ask questions which were responded to by Andy White.

#### **COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND COMMENTS TO CABINET**

Following discussion, it was **AGREED** that the Committee **COMMENTS / RECOMMENDS TO CABINET** that:

- (a) smaller disposals are given the same priority, as larger land and property disposals;
- (b) Officer time is being taken up sorting and photocopying documents , rather than being solely focused on land disposals;
- (c) timescales of moving projects forward , appear to be due to internal Council processes;
- (d) CAROS – approaches should be made to users to purchase freeholds or relocate users so that assets can be rationalised;
- (e) Parish Councils or neighbouring landowners should be encouraged to purchase or take over the maintenance of small slivers of land;
- (f) wherever possible, maximise the use of grants; and
- (g) the Committee recognises the hard work of Officers within the Assets team.

## **PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET**

### **Comments**

I would like to thank the Corporate Management Committee for their time, consideration and suggestions. I am pleased to see that the property team is now up to full strength again after a few testing months.

Prioritisation of tasks is a tough issue for public authorities. We all want to achieve as much as possible. In an era of financial stress this can lead to difficulties. It's important that the team should keep a balanced workload: a mixture of large and small transactions and a mixture of disposals and other work, work that makes sure that the basics are in place and that decisions are made based on accurate information. I have been working with the team and will continue to do so to make sure that we make progress on key priorities as well as making sure that we do so from a platform of robust records and information. A balance is needed and I am determined that we should get it right.

Questions around Community Assets are sensitive. We all want to support the community – it's why we all stood to be elected – we also have wide community responsibilities of fairness and wise use of resources. It is my view that a review of Community Halls and of CAROS is overdue. It has been discussed before and I would like to take this opportunity to recommend to my Cabinet colleagues that it is formally requested and that the Committee's recommendation is considered fully in that review.

The Committee's recommendation on smaller pieces of land aligns closely with the aspirations set out in the Property Strategy recently adopted. A careful approach is needed in order to maintain the integrity of our environment and I wouldn't want to see areas of open space carved up, but there is a strong case for identifying areas that do not contribute to the community. There is also a case for looking a gain at public conveniences in parished areas where this is consistent with the Community Asset Transfer Policy and the Public Conveniences Strategy. Our approach needs to be that if property is not contributing we must seek to dispose of it.

I agree that the appropriate seeking of grants is essential and I am pleased to note that much hard work is done in this area by the Council's Corporate Director for Operational Services and the regeneration and seafronts teams who are pursuing a number of funding opportunities at present.

I thank the Committee for their kind words in respect of the work of the team. A sentiment that I echo in making the following:-

### **Recommendations to Cabinet**

That Cabinet:

- (a) requests that, under the direction of the Deputy Leader, officers pursue a prioritised and balanced programme of work including both large and small transactions, moving positively forward with that programme while addressing the need for accurate, complete, and accessible records and that these transactions are carried out as expeditiously as properly possible.

- (b) requests that reviews of CAROS and of Community Halls be brought forward for its consideration.
- (c) requests that officers consider the potential for the care of community land and facilities to be provided within the community and for a renewed emphasis on the disposal of land that does not, and cannot, contribute to the community.
- (d) requests that officers continue to seek grant funding of projects and initiatives wherever possible.