



CORPORATE AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 24TH JUNE 2025

SUBJECT: COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER POLICY REFRESH

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF ASSETS AND DECARBONISATION

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek the views and endorsement of the Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee for the refreshed Community Asset Transfer (CAT) policy and related documents, prior to its consideration by Cabinet. The updated policy aims to enhance community empowerment, improve transparency and accountability, align with strategic objectives and support economic and social benefits.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 A Community Asset Transfer (CAT) policy defines how a local authority handles asset transfers, with a specific focus on community ownership. The policy and approach is an integral part of the Council's Asset Management Planning process.
- 2.2 The Council is facing significant financial challenges and simply cannot afford to deliver everything which is currently does. This refreshed proactive approach is an opportunity to deliver savings whilst safeguarding valued community assets and in some cases services. By facilitating the transfer of assets to capable community organisations, the policy aims to generate economic and social benefits. These could include employment and volunteering opportunities, improved and strengthened community services.
- 2.3 We are updating and enhancing our approach to ensure a clear vision and effective mechanism for advancing opportunities to transfer land, buildings and services to the community. The policy replaces the original CAT policy endorsed by Cabinet in 2019 and aligns with the evolving financial landscape and the Council's increased emphasis on empowering communities. The updated policy aligns with our broader strategic objectives of promoting sustainable development, enhancing local services and supporting

community-led initiatives. The revised policy is included at Appendix 1 for reference.

- 2.4 By providing clearer guidelines and support, the refreshed policy will empower local communities to take ownership of assets, fostering greater community engagement and self-sufficiency. The refreshed approach outlines a clear consistent method for the application, assessment and approval process. The framework aims to be robust yet flexible, recognising that not all assets can be evaluated in the same way.
- 2.5 Community Asset Transfer (CAT) empowers communities by transferring council assets to their management and control, enabling them to secure assets that have been declared surplus to operational requirements. There may be challenges that recipients have to face and overcome during the transfer process and once the asset is within their control. A commitment and drive is required from all partners to achieve a successful and sustainable outcome. The revised documents include more detailed criteria and processes, ensuring that all asset transfers are conducted in a fair, transparent and accountable manner.
- 2.6 Our proactive refreshed approach will be implemented with the assistance of our Communications team. We have created a Community Asset Transfer Policy accompanied by a separate, simplified application guidance / checklist document and associated application forms, plus relevant content on our web pages. There is also a councillor guidance document with plans to roll out training and information guides and best practice stories. It is our intention that this information will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis as we progress schemes and apply lessons learned.
- 2.7 The primary goal is to assist community groups in achieving successful asset transfers. As part of the policy refresh, it became evident that appointing dedicated Community Asset Transfer (CAT) officers is essential to providing the necessary support to applicants. We have already recruited one CAT officer with another soon joining the team.
- 2.8 Assessing available resources within existing teams such as Property and Legal Services is crucial. Collaboration with other teams including Business Support, Community Support (Caerphilly Cares) and Finance is also vital. Additionally, establishing links with external agency links is necessary to ensure comprehensive support.
- 2.9 Most assets considered as suitable for transfer are recently operational and it is assumed that they will be compliant or will require only minor investment at transfer. Details for transfer considerations will need to be considered on a case by case basis and included as part of the reporting process. The support package offered by the Council must extend beyond the initial transfer stage. It should continue throughout the lifecycle of the project to support its development, promote sustainability and ensure compliance.

- 2.10 The transfer of assets declared surplus to operational requirements offers the opportunity to return these assets to occupational use. The process relieves the council of certain building management responsibilities and associated costs. While assets are held during the transfer process, there will be ongoing property-related expenses and a budget is required to cover these holding costs. Once an asset is transferred to the successful community group, these costs will be recognised as savings.
- 2.11 To support community initiatives certain asset transfers may be approved at below market rent. These transfers recognise the significant social and community benefits provided by the recipient organisations. Each case will be evaluated on its merits, ensuring the community value justifies the reduced rent. This approach aligns with our commitment to fostering resilience and empowering communities.
- 2.12 There are several pilot schemes currently underway to test the revised approach and timelines. This report includes details of these projects to provide an update on their progress and seek approval to continue within the proposed framework.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee consider and provide their views on the refreshed Community Asset Transfer (CAT) policy and related documents and recommend that Cabinet:
- a) Approve the proposed refreshed policy approach,
 - b) Acknowledge actions that are underway and approve the outlined routes for the pilot schemes and new applications being considered.
 - c) Approve the relocation of CCTV equipment from Hafod Deg and agree to release the budget for this work.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The reasons for the recommendations are;
- a & b) To ensure that the policy establishes a framework for informed decision making and offers a standardised, flexible approach for advancing Community Asset Transfer applications.
 - d) The relocation of the CCTV equipment is required prior to the transfer or disposal of Hafod Deg.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 Community Asset Transfer (CAT) may take a variety of forms but fundamentally, it entails transferring management and/or ownership to community groups. It serves as an alternative to commercial disposals,

safeguarding community buildings and spaces for the long-term. By doing so, it enables councils and communities to maximise local value while minimising public sector costs.

- 5.2 Taking a strategic approach to community ownership can yield wider benefits and the transfer of assets to relevant community groups offers a potential route for disposal. The community asset transfer policy is an integral component of the asset management planning process, complemented by ongoing asset management reviews and the current service focused assessments. The framework for the Community Asset Transfer policy considers the Council's financial climate, challenges and the goal of empowering communities.
- 5.3 Given the current financial climate, it is crucial that our CAT policy and approach play a central role in how we consider asset disposal. With budgetary constraints in mind, we must prioritise strategies that maximise value and efficiency. The council is facing significant financial challenges and simply cannot afford to deliver everything which it currently does. By focusing on CAT as a disposal option, we have an opportunity to deliver savings, whilst safeguarding valued community assets.
- 5.4 The current Community Asset Transfer policy endorsed by Cabinet in 2019 meets the requirements of the Welsh Government's 2016 Good Practice Guide 2016" but is primarily reactive. The refreshed approach, reflecting Caerphilly CBCs financial challenges and the latest Welsh Government Best Practice Guidance (October 2019) aims to be proactive . The policy and approach have been reviewed against current Welsh Government guidance and other local authorities' approaches. This review provides an opportunity to adopt a more proactive strategy.
- 5.5 Our aim is to provide a flexible approach that aligns with the specific asset and proposal being considered. For instance, a short term lease or other management agreement may require less detailed assessment criteria compared to a long-term lease of 25 years or more. Due to the diverse nature of Council property assets, a one size fits all approach to Community Asset Transfer is impractical. Therefore, a consistent, principled yet flexible framework is necessary. The proposed approach can be tailored based on asset size, nature of the asset, the applicant and rights being granted.
- 5.6 The refreshed approach will establish a framework to guide decision making where the overarching principles seek to support community need, the Council's Corporate policies and broader objectives. The council website and related documents will be the reference point for a wide variety of community groups who may be considering a Community Asset Transfer.
- 5.7 Our Communications Team are assisting with the rebranding exercise, considering website design and content. Relevant support documentation and information will be available on the Council's website, allowing digital access to the necessary documents and the option to submit applications on online. Alternatively, groups can choose to submit applications manually. We have

reviewed the suite of documents to support the application process and these are included for reference at Appendix 3 – 8.

- 5.8 A structured approach is in place to evaluate the suitability of assets for transfer, supported by a decision reporting framework. When assets are identified as suitable for transfer, consultation will be made collaboratively with relevant Service areas and Cabinet Members. Regular reports will be provided through Leadership, with progress updates to Cabinet as part of the process.
- 5.9 To support community initiatives, certain asset transfers may be approved at below market rent. These transfers recognise the significant social and community benefits provided by the recipient organisations. Each case will be evaluated on its merits, ensuring the community value justifies the reduced rent. This approach aligns with our commitment to fostering resilience and empowering communities.
- 5.10 The Council's due diligence process should be proportionate to the scale and complexity of the proposal. Applications and recommendations will be considered along the following reporting route; The decision route flow chart is provided for reference at Appendix 2. **The CAT process includes the following;**

CAT Delivery Group – Chaired by the Strategic Asset Manager, this group will consist of key officers within the council and will consider the detailed business of the transfer from start to finish. The group will consider each application at key stages throughout the process.

- **Member Decision Panel** – Leader, Deputy Leader, Relevant Cabinet Members, key officers attend in an advisory capacity
 - **Leadership and PDM** – Director of Assets and Decarbonisation has responsibility for reporting updates and progress to PDM and CMT at regular intervals.
 - **Cabinet** – Decision Making Body for transfers.
- 5.11 A CAT Delivery Group has been established and meets on a regular basis. Membership is defined with terms of reference. The group includes core and optional members to ensure appropriate coverage for various considerations depending on the nature of the asset under review. Various service areas such as Communications, Caerphilly Cares, Finance, HR and Leisure Services are included to assist with the delivery element. Depending on the nature of the proposed transfer and end use there will also be a requirement to consult with other service areas during the process. This group will consider applications and make recommendations during the process which will feed into the decision making process.
- 5.12 The recommendations at various stages of the process are presented to the Member Panel which comprises the Leader, Deputy Leader and relevant

Cabinet members. Officers attend on an advisory basis. Recommendations and support for options flowing from the member panel will feed into the process and reporting structure. Where relevant, interested parties will be invited to present their proposal to the Member Panel as part of the decision making process. The outcome of these discussions will be included in the final report to Cabinet for each scheme.

- 5.13 To streamline the process and ensure timely decision-making, categories of assets may be consolidated in tranches and presented to Cabinet for approval. The CAT Delivery Group will determine the schedule for reporting, using criteria such as; asset type, submission dates or priority requirements. Depending on the timing of the reports, if terms have not been agreed at the stage of reporting, authority for approving the specific terms of asset transfers will be delegated to the Director of Assets and Decarbonisation and endorsed by the Director and relevant Cabinet Member/s, subject to the submission of a satisfactory business case. This delegation will enable efficient handling of routine transfers, while ensuring that all decisions are made in accordance with established policies and procedures. Major or contentious transfers will still require full Cabinet final approval.
- 5.14 The goal is to assist suitably constituted groups in achieving successful transfers by providing dedicated resources to work with and guide them through the process. As part of the policy refresh, it became evident that appointing dedicated Community Asset Transfer (CAT) officers is essential to providing the necessary support to applicants. We have already appointed one CAT officer, with another soon joining the team. Additionally, we need to assess the resources available within Property Services, Legal Services and other teams to assist the CAT officer and groups during the application, assessment, decision and transfer stages. Collaboration with other teams, such as Business Support, Community Support (Caerphilly Cares) and Finance will be essential to advance proposals and assist groups.
- 5.15 We will also provide links to external agencies for additional support within the documentation. Assistance during the handover period and post transfer is also viewed as an essential element of the support offer. This is to ensure that groups are provided with ongoing assistance to grow and achieve success. This support will also take the form of a monitoring role to check compliance with building related tasks.
- 5.16 The proposed process consists of 3 stages: an expression of interest, a full business plan with a 5 year financial forecast and a final decision phase. The policy and guidance document outline the application process, eligible assets, assets that are excluded, guide timelines, decision criteria and the available support for applicant groups. The suite of documents are included for reference at Appendix 2 – 8.
- 5.17 There are two routes available for applications – standard and fast-track. A simplified fast-track risk based approach can be adopted for certain assets and applicants which should make the process easier to navigate for priority applicants e.g. existing tenants / users or established properly constituted

groups with good track record and joint ventures. This approach can potentially cut 12 weeks from the application timeline by eliminating the need for certain groups to complete a full business case application.

- 5.18 To fast track a Community Asset Transfer application for priority applicants, we can request key information and documents to ensure a thorough yet expedited review process. This would include provision of pre application support, a more concise business plan, review of relevant documents including financial history and projections and expedited decision making.
- 5.19 We are currently testing the timelines and process with our pilot schemes. Timescales will vary on several factors such as;
- the complexity of the transfer,
 - the experience of the group and support required,
 - capacity of GAVO and other third sector agencies to support groups at various stages,
 - access to and dependency on funding if transfer is dependent on this,
 - governance arrangements and whether the group are already properly constituted, and
 - capacity within the relevant service teams.
- 5.20 There is a proposal to publish a priority schedule of assets – A Community Asset Schedule. This schedule will outline asset categories for consideration and will be published on the website on a regular basis. This will link in with assets identified during service reviews being undertaken and the ongoing Asset Management Planning process. Assets considered for transfer and deemed suitable will be agreed via the decision route outlined above.
- 5.21 When discussing playing fields and sports related assets, it is crucial to distinguish between applications submitted by preferential users for operational sites and those concerning sites deemed surplus to requirements. Preferential users typically include entities or individuals who have a vested interest in the operational functionality of the site, such as a local sporting group or clubs. These applications often aim to enhance or maintain the site's operational status, ensuring it continues to service its intended purpose effectively.
- 5.22 Applications from existing users will be considered as part of the overarching CAT process to ensure that there is uniformity and transparency. Where there are existing groups utilising sites, efforts will be made to encourage collaboration for multiple uses to ensure communities are represented and afforded the opportunity to join to enhance the service delivery.
- 5.23 There are application costs associated with the transfer of assets. These will be referenced on the relevant CAT page of the CCBC website and discussed during the application process. It is proposed that these charges will continue. Specific reference is made to the consideration of transfer of sports facilities with the service area already considering several transfers under an agreed format. Where necessary, certain aspects will need to continue within the broader scope of the overarching policy to ensure specific considerations are

captured and addressed. Agreed charges relating to the transfer of sports facilities are set out and will need to be evaluated on a case by case basis.

Pilot schemes

- Hafod Deg, Rhymney
- 5.24 Following the marketing exercise, an initial group submitted an application but later withdrew. A second group is now interested and we are discussing their initial proposals. They are seeking their Board's support to submit a formal expression of interest. This will be considered and progressed if viable.
- 5.25 The building currently supports the CCTV equipment, which needs to be relocated to another CCBC asset as part of the closure and disposal process. This move will incur costs of approximately £4,000 (IT will feed full costs).
- Tredeggar Park Toilets, Risca
- 5.26 The surplus toilets have been advertised as a community asset transfer opportunity. An established community group has submitted a strong expression of interest proposing to reopen the accessible toilet and convert the remainder of the building into community facilities for park users. We are awaiting the submission of their full business case; this is expected week commencing 2nd June. The application will be reviewed and progressed in line with the decision and reporting route detailed above.
- Land at Dan y Graig, Risca
- 5.27 Following the marketing of this surplus site, multiple applications have been received. Due to the proposed uses, the applicants were encouraged to explore a collaborative venture. A full business case has been submitted and assessed and is being reported through the decision route detailed above. The report is due to be considered by Cabinet in the meeting scheduled for July 2025.

New CAT Submissions

- 5.28 There are several applications that at currently being considered within the CAT framework
- 9 Playing field applications
 - 1 bowls club application
 - 2 allotment applications
 - Several library sites to be marketed
 - New Tredeggar Winding House

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 The proposal and support package assume the presence of dedicated CAT officer(s) to assist with applications, supported by necessary officers and service areas. Adequate resourcing of various teams is essential to manage the number of assets and applications.

- 6.2 When assets are declared surplus and suitable for transfer, holding costs will be incurred while pending transfer. It is assumed that a suitable budget will cover these costs during the holding period. Upon transfer, any surplus budget will be recognised as savings.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 A full Equalities Impact Assessment was undertaken on the proposed Community Asset Transfer policy refresh. The report is attached

[Link to IIA](#)

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There is a requirement to appoint dedicated Community Asset Transfer Officers as detailed in the report. There are no additional costs associated with these appointments. Any further resource implications will depend on the number of applications submitted and assets to be made available for transfer. There are also building related costs for any period where a building/asset is held pending transfer.
- 8.2 A relevant budget for the asset will be agreed with the service area and transferred to Property Services to cover any holding period as part of the surplus asset process. Once an asset is transferred to the successful community group, these costs will be recognised as savings. Any potential building related savings will be detailed per asset as part of the reporting process. These will include NNDR and utility standing charges.
- 8.3 It is anticipated that most assets to be considered as suitable for the asset transfer process will be recently operational assets and will require minimal investment. Where there are potential requirements outside of the basic compliance considerations, details will be included as part of the reporting process.
- 8.4 To support community initiatives, certain asset transfers may be approved at below market rent. These transfers recognise the significant social and community benefits provided by the recipient organisations. Each case will be evaluated on its merits, ensuring the community value justifies the reduced rent. This approach aligns with our commitment to fostering resilience and empowering communities. The lifecycle of the project and deliverables will be monitored through regular rent review clauses in the lease and ongoing support from the CAT officer and regular reviews by the project group.
- 8.5 There are costs associated with the transfer of CCTV equipment from Hafod Deg following closure and prior to transfer. There are also ongoing holding costs whilst awaiting transfer. The building budget will need to transfer from the current service to Property Services during the holding period.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The requirement for dedicated Community Asset Transfer (CAT) Officers has been identified, the team will initially consist of two CAT officers with support from other members of the Property team and in collaboration with other service areas and third sector organisations.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 The report and associated documents have been circulated for comment within the CAT Delivery Group.
- 10.2 During the review process the draft policy and associated documents have been circulated for comment within CMT and Leadership. Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations (GAVO) has also been consulted and are to be included as consultee during the application process. Further consultation is being undertaken as part of this reporting process and comments will be included in the report.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 Local Government Act 1998. Local Government Act 1972 Section 123 – 127 and 128: General Disposals Consent (Wales) Circular 2003.

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Consultees:

Councillor Nigel George (Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Highways)
Leadership Team
Mark S Williams, Executive Director of Corporate and Regeneration
Leanne Sykes, Deputy Director of Financial Services and Section 151 Officer
Lisa Downey, HR Service Manager
Vickie Julian Senior Lawyer – Planning, Land and Highways
Tina McMahon Caerphilly Cares Manager
Brodie Thomson-Payne, Strategic Asset Manager
Lesley Thomas Community Asset Transfer Officer
Harry Skiff, Communications Manager
Kathryn Peters, Service Manager: Service Improvement and Partnerships
John Ollman, Service Support and Development Officer
Nicola Evans, Estates Officer
Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations (GAVO)

Appendices

Appendix 1	Caerphilly County Borough Council Community Asset Transfer Policy Refreshed Approach (DRAFT with Communications team to finalise)
Appendix 2	Community Asset Transfer Decision Route Flow Chart
Appendix 3	Caerphilly County Borough Council Community Asset Transfer Application Guidance Document
Appendix 4	Community Asset Transfer Councillor Guidance
Appendix 5	Stage 1 Community Asset Transfer Expression of Interest (EOI) Template
Appendix 6	Stage 1 Community Asset Transfer Expression of Interest (EOI) Scoring Matrix
Appendix 7	Stage 2 Community Asset Transfer Full Business Plan Template
Appendix 8	Stage 2 Community Asset Transfer Full Business Plan Scoring Matrix