

Delegated Decisions by Cabinet Member for Property, Cultural & Community Services - Monday, 11 July 2016

Statement of Decision

Present:

Councillor Lorraine Lindsay-Gale, Cabinet Member for Property, Cultural & Community Services

Officers: Nigel Cunning (Environment & Economy) and Deborah Miller (Law & Governance).

Also in attendance:

Other Members: Councillor Susanna Pressel

Questions from County Councillors

Councillor Susanna Pressel to Councillor Lindsay Gale

Q. I was surprised to detect no sense of urgency whatsoever in the report.

A. The report seeks approval of revisions to policy – it does not cover implementation, past or future.

Q. In these extremely difficult times we need to carry out comprehensive "place reviews" to identify where we can make better use of our assets and where we can release all that are surplus to our current requirements, whether by transfer to community groups or in other ways. Please can you tell me when this will happen and how?

A. A programme of Place Reviews is being developed to focus upon key areas that hold the potential to deliver opportunity to better utilise assets, this is being prioritised as part of the transformation programme. Crucially, the suggestion that we release all that are surplus to our current requirements is not the sole key measure, we need to assess both our current *and* future requirements, and the opportunity presented by our asset ownership in the widest sense.

Q. Who will carry out these reviews – do we have enough staff with the necessary skills?

A. Reviews will be carried out by officers from Property and Service Directorates, led jointly by the Director of Transformation and the Director of Environment & Economy drawing upon local knowledge held by elected members, residents and businesses, officers and public sector partners. Where necessary this will be supplemented by the use of targeted external support

Q. How will community groups know what might be available to them?

A. Community Groups can contact the County Councils Estates team <u>Estates.Team@Oxfordshire.gov.uk</u> to see whether property may become available to suit their requirements and to gain information upon the terms that would apply.

Q. I'm worried about the proposed length of the leases (4.3.2). Is it not the case that community groups will have trouble getting lottery grants if their lease is less than 20 years?

A. It is correct that some grant terms will require longer lease periods in order to secure funds; OCC would look to consider such requests for longer terms on a case basis. There are implications to community groups where terms exceed 7 years, statute requires the County Council to secure rents set against 'best value' as opposed to 'fair and reasonableness', it also results in the transaction becoming a registerable interest which can significantly increases cost.

Q. I'd also like to know what is happening about properties which are in a poor state, as referred to in 2.1. f.

A. The County Council balances investment to improve condition against availability of funding, operational sites will take priority over sites used by third parties, as part of the place based approach we are adopting, we will be identifying and addressing this.

Q. Surely they should in many cases be disposed of now, rather than sitting idle?

A. Any site which is no longer needed for operational purposes and declared surplus is released through sale or lease in light of the asset management plan and asset transfer policies.

Revised Asset Transfer Policy

Documentation considered:

Report Revised Asset Transfer Policy

A copy is attached to the signed copy of this decision.

Cabinet Member's Comments

These are sensible revisions that we should implement as soon as possible.

Decision

Having regard to the arguments and options set out in the documentation before me, the representations made to me and the further considerations set out above, I confirm my decisions on this matter as follows:

to approve the revised Asset Transfer Policy.

Signed Cabinet Member for Property, Cultural & Community Services

Date2016