

14 July 2022

Report of Director of Regulatory Services and Director of Corporate and Customer Services

DISTRICT COUNCIL'S ASSET LIST

PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report updates Members on progress in updating the District Council's official list of assets, as requested at the Council meeting held on 14 December 2020.

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the report is noted.

WARDS AFFECTED

All

STRATEGIC LINK

The effective management of the District Council's assets supports all 3 of the Council's Corporate Plan priorities.

1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 At its meeting on 14 December 2020 Council considered a report that provided information on the methodology and outcome of an independent review of assets. This report had followed on from a motion debated at the Council meeting held on 2 July 2020, where it was resolved that the asset list should be reviewed as part of the Council's '...duty to address the legacy of colonialism, slavery and racism in all its forms.'
- 1.2 It had become clear during this review that the Council official asset list was not up-to-date, in that it had not taken account of recent transfers or acquisitions of land. Council therefore resolved that the asset list should be reviewed annually and presented to the Governance and Resources Committee for review.
- 1.3 In order to address this issue an officer working group was formed, with the purpose of updating this list. As part of the work of this group, it became clear that there were in fact 3 separate lists of assets, held by the Estates and Facilities Team, the Legal Services Team and the Finance Team. These lists were maintained separately, for different purposes and appeared not to have been reconciled for some time. The group

considered that the most appropriate way to begin to address these issues was to examine the assets held in specific geographical areas of the district, to check each record, complete any necessary legal paperwork and to then update the lists. Once each geographical area had been completed, the group would move on to the next. Because of the concerns that had previously been raised by Tansley Parish Council, it was agreed that asset records relating to Tansley would be examined first.

- 1.4 Through working in this way, it was the aim of the group that the 3 separate asset lists could be rationalised into 1 central list, which would be held in the Uniform database and mapped on GIS.
- 1.5 Because of the nature of the work being undertaken, the group has comprised members from the Estates and Facilities, Legal Services, Finance and Business Support. It has been chaired by the Director of Regulatory Services.

2 REPORT

- 2.1 In considering assets in Tansley, the group identified 5 sites for which the records might be incomplete. Of these, 1 was an acquisition by the District Council, 1 was a historical community asset transfer to the Parish Council, 2 were community asset transfers to the Parish Council which was in progress, and 1 was a historical record that appeared to be incorrectly described. All required administrative work by Legal Services in order to formally complete the property transaction. At the time of drafting this report work on 3 of these transactions had been completed, whilst the 2 community asset transfers that were in progress still require completion.
- 2.2 The group considered that it would also be of value to consider the changes that had arisen out of the review of public conveniences. It was identified that there were 5 public conveniences where the District Council's records required updating. Of these 4 had transferred out of the District Council's control, whilst the 5th involved a land ownership dispute that required resolution before any further action could be taken to transfer the asset. In examining the records a further complication arose in that one of the assets could involve land belonging to a charity, of which the Council was a trustee. This could have implications as to whether the property could be formally transferred.
- 2.3 At the time of writing this report, 2 of these 5 records has been updated. A further 1 requires completion statements and 2 require further investigation.

3 COMMENT

- 3.1 It has become clear that work to update the Council's official asset list is detailed, time consuming and relatively low priority, as compared to other projects that the relevant teams are involved in. Whilst the project has been scoped, progress has been slow and capacity, particularly within the Legal Services Team to dedicate time to the work needed to complete transactions and update records is severely constrained due to the volume of other high priority work being undertaken by the team to support Members' stated priorities in the Corporate Plan.
- 3.2 There is no ready-made solution to this issue at the current time. However, the Corporate Leadership Team has agreed to consider issues of resourcing and

prioritisation within the Legal Services Team and the issue of asset management is one of several that will be included within those considerations.

- 3.3 In the meantime, the Governance and Resources Committee is asked to note the 5 updates to the District Council's asset list.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

3.1 Legal

This report is to update Members on progress of updating the District Council's official list of assets. As the recommendation is for noting, the legal risk connected to this report has been assessed as low.

3.2 Financial

If the work continues to be carried out by employees on the current approved establishment, the cost of officer time to undertake the work that is required to update the asset list and rationalise records is contained in existing budgets. However, there is a risk that some external funding could be lost if certain work is not completed within given deadlines. Rationalising records and bringing them up to date should result in efficiency savings in the longer term. If items on the list are identified as potential disposals, this could result in financial gains for the authority. The financial risk is assessed as low.

5 OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1 In preparing this report, the relevance of the following factors has also been considered: prevention of crime and disorder, equalities, environmental, climate change, health, human rights, personnel and property.

6 CONTACT INFORMATION

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7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

8 ATTACHMENTS

None