

## Highland Council Redesign Board Workshop -May 15<sup>th</sup> 2018

### Community Empowerment Act: briefing on Community Asset Transfers and Participation Requests.

The Board's remit includes a role to 'monitor the Council's response to new duties under the CE Act to make sure we respond well to community bodies making participation requests and applying for asset transfers.

### Community Asset Transfer (CAT)

This report to Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2018 [Item 19 - Community Asset Transfer –Annual Review](#) Report, 176.81 KB sets out our experience of CAT since this part of the Act came into force in January 2017. It sets out the level and nature of request and interest we have received.

In summary these are-

- **50** expressions of interest
- **11** full community asset transfer requests

In addition there are upwards of **250 current leases** that are offered on at nil or nominal cost to community bodies

Over the first year, a number of issues have emerged that require consideration as part of the review. These include:

- how we and partners engage and support community bodies to undertake asset transfer,
- assisting communities to present asset transfer requests that are complete, with supporting documentation and evidence that allows a robust evaluation of requests to be undertaken,
- assisting communities to develop a view of future community infrastructure needs that take a holistic view of facilities in communities irrespective of management/ownership arrangements,
- communities have a clear, well planned approach to sustaining assets under their control,
- how the costs of transfer are met and by whom - legal and property

- how the costs associated with individual properties are captured, and a view formed of the relative cost and value of transfers and future potential savings
- the relative value of capital receipts versus future savings
- taking a strategic and proactive approach to the Council's property assets and ensuring transferring assets to communities forms part of this approach e.g. particular property types

### **Participation Requests**

**These are part of the range of mechanisms within the Act that seek to-**

- Engage communities in improving outcomes
- Encourage and promote dialogue between public bodies and communities
- Tackle inequalities
- Support the increased participation of those whose voices are less heard or who face additional barriers

Participation requests allow a community body to talk with public authorities about local issues and services.

Where a community body believes it could help to improve an outcome, it will be able to ask that the public body takes part in a process to improve that outcome.

Our experience, in common with most public bodies, has been that communities have not so far sought to utilise them. So far we have received 1 request which has been refused as it does not seek to improve an outcome. Its focus was in stalling/halting a budget decision.

We need to consider why this might be-

- Lack of awareness
- Lack of understanding of how they might use them
- Lack of support to engage in developing requests

We also need to consider how we approach developing these in a way that avoids amplifying the voices of community members who already have disproportionate level of influence. The focus should be about engaging those who are most in need about how we improve their communities and experience of services.