

Neath Port Talbot Council

Response Form to National Report recommendations relevant to local government

Ref: NR2	Date of report: November 2018	Title of review: Provision of Local Government Services to Rural Communities: Community Asset Transfer (CAT)	Recommendation	Accepting / Comment	Action Plan
<p>NPT Background:</p> <p>Over the years this and predecessor Authorities have occasionally transferred responsibility for the repair, maintenance and operation of a number of property assets primarily of playing fields and pavilion to user sports clubs and community halls and facilities to Town and Community Councils by way of repairing leases which for all intent and purposes were Community Asset Transfers (CATs).</p> <p>These leases were usually for a term of 25 years subject to a 5 year review in a fairly standard lease format at an annual rent which reflected its limited use. This was on the basis that the tenants could then apply to the Authority for a grant to cover part or all of the annual rent which was then considered and if deemed appropriate awarded on the merits of each case.</p> <p>However this emphasis on leased CATs changed with the onset of the severe cuts to the Authorities budgets resultant of national austerity measures starting back in 2013. Since that time the Authority has granted some 85 standard repairing leases of property assets to sports and community groups and organisations via CATs transfers to include all of its sports ground and facilities, most of its community centres, many of its libraries and some playgrounds.</p>					

Ref: NR2	Date of report: November 2018	Title of review: <u>Provision of Local Government Services to Rural Communities: Community Asset Transfer (CAT)</u>	Recommendation	Accepting / Comment	Action Plan
<p>This has been a very successful exercise with all of the facilities still being leased and operating for the benefit of the local communities. The only exception being the bowls green at Ynyscorrwg Park Glyncorrwg where the club folded a few years ago due to lack of numbers. The exercise was completed on time which enabled the savings to be achieved on time.</p> <p>By way of background the Authority's FFP meant there was a need to quickly and efficiently achieve significant cost savings from various operational property assets by transferring responsibility for all repair maintenance and running costs on an agreed phased basis each year by way of repairing leases via CAT.</p> <p>Due to the urgency to achieve the required savings at the outset it was decided to adopt a 'light touch approach' rather than to develop and implement a formal policy. Instead a small focused team of senior officers drove and coordinated the process. These were from: Property and Regeneration, Streetcare Services (for sports grounds and facilities) and Education Leisure and Lifelong Learning Directorate (for libraries and community centres). They regularly met and were the direct contact points for the relevant user groups. The required savings were achieved within tight timescales.</p> <p>This was achieved with the important input and support when necessary from NPT CVS (who assisted and advised the user groups on setting up and registering themselves as legal entities to enter into the lease), Education Leisure and Lifelong Learning (who advised and worked with the user groups to access any available external grants), legal officers (who legally complete the lease) and Director of Finance and Corporate Services (who dealt with all applications from user groups for grants in respect of the annual rents etc.).</p> <p>There was strong political support for the process with the emphasis being to ensure that as many facilities as possible transferred and remained available for the use and benefit of the local community. The emphasis was on regular direct face to face contact</p>					

Ref: NR2	Date of report: November 2018	Title of review: Provision of Local Government Services to Rural Communities: Community Asset Transfer (CAT)	Recommendation	Accepting / Comment	Action Plan
<p>along with a consistent approach and providing the user groups with as much background information on the running and operating costs and identifying what limited “snagging repair works” the Council would undertake prior to the lease being granted. All leases were structured allowing the tenants to hand back its lease on 3 months’ notice if unfortunately it is unable to continue to operate the facility.</p> <p>There have been very few cases where leases have been handed back and where this has occurred all the facilities have since been re-let to other community groups. In the vast majority of cases there was only one interested party which was either the user club(s) and organisations or a single community focused group where no existing user group existed or were willing take on the lease.</p> <p>In the few situations where competing groups were interested in taking on the lease it was dealt with through a formal tender procurement process where interested parties were provided with the lease (along with a grant award for the rent for the first 5 years) with the successful party chosen based upon its business case, experience and ability to run and operate such a facility. It has to be acknowledged and recognised that all of this could not have been achieved without the strong support of the local communities and groups throughout NPTCBC.</p>					
			<p>R1 Local authorities need to do more to make CATs (Community Asset Transfers) simpler and more appealing, help build the capacity of community and town councils, give</p>		

Ref: NR2	Date of report: November 2018	Title of review: Provision of Local Government Services to Rural Communities: Community Asset Transfer (CAT)	Recommendation	Accepting / Comment	Action Plan
			<p>them more guidance in raising finance, and look to support other community development models such as social enterprises that support social value and citizen involvement.</p> <p>In addition, we recommend that local authorities monitor and publish CAT numbers and measure the social impact of CATs.</p>	Yes	<p>We do not have a formal policy but there will only be limited opportunity for further CATs going forward as most of the relevant assets have already been leased out.</p> <p>The reality would appear to be that many Authorities are only now undertaking the exercise that we completed a number of years ago.</p> <p>We are however considering developing a policy on the ongoing management of those assets already leased out.</p> <p>We could report on the number of CATs at the end of each financial year however there has, to date, been no assessment of the social impact of CATs.</p>

Ref: NR2	Date of report: November 2018	Title of review: Provision of Local Government Services to Rural Communities: Community Asset Transfer (CAT)	Recommendation	Accepting / Comment	Action Plan
			<p>R2 Local authorities have significant scope to provide better and more visible help and support before, during, and after the community asset transfer process. We conclude that there is considerable scope to improve the business planning, preparation, and aftercare for community asset transfer. We recommend that local authorities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify community assets transfer's role in establishing community hubs, networks of expertise and clusters of advice and prevention services 2. Work with town and community councils to develop their ability to take on more CATs 	Yes	<p>Whilst accepting that there is always room for improvement we consider that the established process and procedure for granting of lease via CATs is robust and fit for purpose. From the outset all CAT tenants were advised that we would continue to provide technical support advice and guidance wherever possible. This means that Property and Regeneration are regularly contacted by CAT tenants on a wide range of queries relating to the sites and in particular where consents for proposed works are required under the leases. Property and Regeneration in conjunction with Finance are</p>

Ref: NR2	Date of report: November 2018	Title of review: Provision of Local Government Services to Rural Communities: Community Asset Transfer (CAT)	Recommendation	Accepting / Comment	Action Plan
			<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Identify which assets are suitable to transfer, and clarify what the authority needs to do to enable their transfer 4. Ensure their CAT policy adequately covers aftercare, long term support, post transfer support, signposting access to finance, and sharing the learning about works well 5. Support community-based leadership by developing networks of interest, training and coaching, and encouraging volunteering 		<p>preparing a report with the aim of setting up a small annual capital fund whereby tenants of CAT leased sites could apply and be awarded match funding to assist with the overall cost of capital improvement works to the facilities.</p> <p>Property and Regeneration are also currently considering whether the ongoing Corporate property compliance responsible persons staff training can be extending to cover local voluntary clubs and organisations as well as Town/Community Councils (with particular emphasis on sites leased out via CATs) thereby reminding and</p>

Ref:	Date of report:	Title of review:	Recommendation	Accepting / Comment	Action Plan
NR2	November 2018	<u>Provision of Local Government Services to Rural Communities: Community Asset Transfer (CAT)</u>			
					providing guidance to tenants on property compliance requirements.

Ref:	Date of report:	Title of review:	Recommendation	Accepting/ Comment	Action Plan
NR3	December 2018	<u>The maturity of local government in use of data</u>			

Ref: NR3	Date of report: December 2018	Title of review: The maturity of local government in use of data	Recommendation	Accepting/ Comment	Action Plan
			<p>R1 Part 1 of the report highlights the importance of creating a strong data culture and clear leadership to make better use of data. We recommend that local authorities:</p> <p>1. Have a clear vision that treats data as a key resource</p>	Yes	To support the Council’s Smart and Connected Digital Strategy, an Information Strategy/Policy will be implemented. Coupled with its Data Protection Policies this will demonstrate a clear vision of how we will utilise data to perform service and treat data as a key resource. The Strategy/Policy will be approved by March 2020 and also contain the monitoring obligations.
			<p>2. Establish corporate data standards and coding that all services use for their core data</p>	Yes	The Council has already identified standards that it will apply to future data sets as standard practice. We have developed this to align with the

Ref: NR3	Date of report: December 2018	Title of review: The maturity of local government in use of data	Recommendation	Accepting/ Comment	Action Plan
					data standards developed by the Government Digital Service.
			<p>1. Undertake an audit to determine what data is held by services and identify any duplicated records and information requests</p>	Yes	<p>The Council's Data Protection Officer will be undertaking an audit of all services within the Council (including all Schools in the locality) to ensure compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and to ensure that services are completing the Information Asset Registry (listing what data they are holding). The Data Protection Officer and Senior Information Risk Officer will then evaluate this information to look at where information is being duplicated. This audit trail will be undertaken and completed by Summer 2020.</p>
			<p>2. Create a central integrated customer account as a gateway to services</p>	Yes	<p>Options to test the business case for an integrated customer account are being evaluated as part of the</p>

Ref: NR3	Date of report: December 2018	Title of review: The maturity of local government in use of data	Recommendation	Accepting/ Comment	Action Plan
					Council's Smart and Connected Digital Strategy. The options appraisal will be completed early 2020-21.
			<p>R2 Part 2 of the report notes that whilst it is important that authorities comply with relevant data protection legislation, they also need to share data with partners to ensure citizens receive efficient and effective services. Whilst these two things are not mutually exclusive, uncertainty on data protection responsibilities is resulting in some officers not sharing data, even where there is agreement to provide partners with information. We recommend that authorities:</p> <p>3. Provide refresher training to service managers to ensure they know when</p>	Yes	Regular training is being undertaken with all services of the Council to ensure compliance with the Data

Ref: NR3	Date of report: December 2018	Title of review: The maturity of local government in use of data	Recommendation	Accepting/ Comment	Action Plan
			and what data they can and cannot share		Protection Act 2018. This work will be ongoing with training required every 2 years. The information governance audit will ensure that all staff are trained in legislative compliance and the principles of data sharing and processing. Additionally, the Council will be explicitly considering an ethical framework to guide investment decisions that it will need to consider as it advances its big data and data analytics agenda.
			4. Review and update data sharing protocols to ensure they support services to deliver their data sharing responsibilities.	Yes	Regular training is being undertaken with all services of the Council to ensure compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the rules in respect of data sharing/processing. This work will be ongoing with training required every 2 years. The information governance audit will

Ref: NR3	Date of report: December 2018	Title of review: The maturity of local government in use of data	Recommendation	Accepting/ Comment	Action Plan
					<p>ensure that all staff are trained in legislative compliance and the principles of data sharing and processing.</p> <p>Training and development needs will be kept under review to ensure that new training and development needs are identified as innovative technology and data solutions are developed.</p>
			<p>R3 In Part 3 of our report, we conclude that adequate resources and sufficient capacity are ongoing challenges. However, without upskilling staff to make better use of data, authorities are missing opportunities to improve their efficiency and effectiveness. We recommend that authorities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify staff who have a role in analysing and managing data to 	Yes	A programme team is being assembled to deliver the Smart and

Ref: NR3	Date of report: December 2018	Title of review: The maturity of local government in use of data	Recommendation	Accepting/ Comment	Action Plan
			remove duplication and free up resources to build and develop capacity in data usage		Connected Digital Strategy. Work is also being undertaken to identify how the Council could partner/collaborate with others to further develop and implement its Information Strategy/Policy. The first phase of the work plan will be delivered in early 2020-21.
			2. Invest and support the development of staff data analytical, mining and segmentation skills	Yes	A number of staff have already been identified and are being developed. We will be defining more clearly the capability we need to grow internally and that which we may want to develop through collaborative means as part of the work identified in R3
			R4 Part 4 of our report highlights that authorities have more to do to create a data-driven decision-making culture and to unlock the potential		

Ref: NR3	Date of report: December 2018	Title of review: The maturity of local government in use of data	Recommendation	Accepting/ Comment	Action Plan
			<p>of the data they hold. We recommend that local authorities:</p> <p>1. Set data reporting standards to ensure minimum data standards underpin decision making</p>	No	We agree that good data and analysis is essential to support effective decision making. We do not consider one set of data reporting standards alone will achieve this but intend to set out a range of activities in our Information Strategy/Policy which will embrace the sentiment in this recommendation.
			<p>2. Make more open data available.</p>	Yes	<p>The Council has made a commitment to open data as part of Smart and Connected Digital Strategy. Officers are currently looking at the business case for publishing data on open data standards and a proposal that defines the approach will be brought forward in 2020-21.</p> <p>Additionally, the Council is presently developing a number of service areas</p>

Ref: NR3	Date of report: December 2018	Title of review: The maturity of local government in use of data	Recommendation	Accepting/ Comment	Action Plan
					<p>to enable more data being available to the general public, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The publication of a contracts register setting out contractual arrangements and upcoming tendering opportunities • The publication of a Freedom of Information Act register <p>Such proposals are aimed for implementation in the Spring 2020.</p>

Ref: NR4	Date of report: June 2019	Title of review: The Effectiveness of Local Planning Authorities in Wales	Recommendation	Accepting/ Comment	Action Plan
			<p>R1 Part 1 of the report sets out the complexities of the planning system showing how challenging it is for local planning authorities to effectively engage with and involve stakeholders in choices and decisions. To improve involvement with stakeholders and ownership of decisions we recommend that local planning authorities:</p> <p>1. Test current engagement and involvement practices and consider the full range of other options available to ensure involvement activities are fit for purpose</p>	Mixed	The planning application process is already subject to significant consultation and publicity. The publicity associated with LDP adoption and review is also subject to extensive consultation as outlined in the delivery agreement associated with the LDP i.e. the Community Involvement Scheme.
			2. Use 'Place Plans' as a vehicle to engage and involve communities and	Mixed	The preparation of 'Place Plans' is the responsibility of Community and

			citizens in planning choices and decision making		Town Councils which do not cover the whole of this county council. The capacity and capability of Community and Town Councils varies from area to area and some may require significant support from officers and there is no capacity following staff cuts to provide that support.
			3. Improve transparency and accountability by holding planning meetings at appropriate times, rotating meetings to take place in areas which are subject to proposed development, webcasting meetings and providing opportunities for stakeholders to address committee meetings	Mixed	The meeting times and venues changing to allow better attendance by the public is something which would need to be further considered.
			R2 Part 2 of the report highlights that local planning authorities have been subject to significant reductions in funding and struggle to deliver their statutory responsibilities. To improve resilience, we recommend that local planning authorities:		

			<p>1. Review their building control fee regimes to ensure the levels set better reflect the actual cost of providing these services and make the service self-funding</p>	Mixed	<p>The building control fees are calculated in accordance with CIPFA guidelines. They have to ensure full cost recovery associated with the fee earning work carried out but also have to remain competitive given that the Approved Inspectors in the private sector are not subject to the same regulations.</p>
			<p>2. Improve capacity by working regionally to:</p> <p>2.i) Integrate services to address specialism gaps</p> <p>2.ii) Develop joint supplementary planning guidance</p> <p>2.iii) Develop future local development plans regionally and in partnership with other local planning authorities</p>	Mixed	<p>Planning Authorities are already working regionally having commissioned regional evidence gathering to support LDPs and emerging SDPs. Specialisms are already shared across the region for example, minerals and waste planning through the use of Service Level Agreements.</p>

		<p>R4 Part 3 of the report summarises the effectiveness and impact of local planning authorities decision making and how well they are performing against national measures. We recommend that local planning authorities improve the effectiveness of planning committees by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reviewing their scheme of delegation to ensure planning committees are focussed on the most important strategic issues relevant to their authority 2. Revising reporting templates to ensure they are clear and unambiguous to help guide decision making and reduce the level of officer recommendations overturned 3. Enforcing the local planning authorities' standards of conduct for meetings. 	<p>No</p> <p>No</p> <p>No</p>	<p>We do not consider that there are any issues re: standards of conduct within the authority which would require enforcing. However should an issue arise, mechanisms are in place to address the issues.</p>
--	--	---	-------------------------------	--

			<p>R5 Part 4 of the report identifies the central role of planning to delivering the ambitions of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. We recommend that local planning authorities:</p> <p>1. Set a clear ambitious vision that shows how planning contributes to improving wellbeing</p>	Mixed	<p>The vision and its link to the WBFG Act will be updated as part of the LDP Review commencing in January 2020. However it is considered that the planning process was aimed at delivering sustainable development in advance of the WBFG Act.</p>
			<p>2. Provide planning committee members with regular and appropriate wellbeing training and support to help deliver their wider responsibilities</p>	No	<p>Training Programmes for Members are in place.</p>
			<p>3. Set appropriate measures for their administration of the planning system and the impact of their planning decisions on wellbeing; and</p> <p>4. Annually publish these performance measures to judge planning authorities impact on wellbeing.</p>	No	<p>The Annual Monitoring Report associated with the LDP will monitor this. These are submitted to Welsh Government every October.</p>