

WEST LOTHIAN COUNCIL COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21

1. Introduction

This Community Asset Transfer Annual Report has been prepared in compliance with the mandatory requirements of Part 5 (Section 95) of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015. The report has been prepared by the council's Asset Manager as the Lead Officer for Community Asset Transfer and it covers the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.

2. Community Asset Transfer Requests Received

The council received one community asset transfer request during the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021. That request is summarised in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Community Asset Transfer Requests received (1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021)

No.	Applicant	Subject Property	Proposed Use	Application Status
1.	Ladywell Good Neighbour Network (2 nd application)	Former public house (The Ferns), Fernbank, Ladywell, Livingston, EH54 6DT	Community hub to deliver a range tailored services to support the Ladywell community.	Application withdrawn by the applicant on 30 March 2021.

3. Community Asset Transfer Requests Refused or Accepted

One community asset transfer request was refused by the council's Asset Transfer Committee during the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021. Details of that refused application are provided in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Community Asset Transfer Requests refused (1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021)

No.	Applicant	Subject Property	Asset Transfer Committee Date
1.	Ladywell Good Neighbour Network (1 st application) (Note: This asset transfer request was received during 2019/20 and was reported as part of the 2019/20 Community Asset Transfer Annual Report)	Former public house (The Ferns), Fernbank, Ladywell, Livingston, EH54 6DT	24 August 2020

Two community asset transfer requests were approved by the council's Asset Transfer Committee during the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021. Details of those approved applications are provided in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Community Asset Transfer Requests approved (1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021)

No.	Applicant	Subject Property	Asset Transfer Committee Date
1.	Fauldhouse and Breich Valley Community Development Trust	Former Eastfield Training Centre, Eastfield Road, Fauldhouse, EH47 9LE	24 August 2020
2.	Ladywell Good Neighbour Network (2 nd application)	Former public house (The Ferns), Fernbank, Ladywell, Livingston, EH54 6DT	15 February 2021

The council did not receive any community asset transfer requests during the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 that resulted in the transfer of ownership or the lease of land, or resulted in other rights in respect of that land being conferred on a community transfer body.

4. Applications for Internal Reviews

The council did not receive any applications for internal review in respect of a decision taken by the Asset Transfer Committee in relation to an asset transfer request during the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.

5. Appeals of Decisions Taken

There were no appeals to the Scottish Ministers in respect of a decision taken by the Asset Transfer Committee or the Asset Transfer Review Body in relation to an asset transfer request during the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.

6. Promotion of the use of Community Asset Transfer Requests

The council's approved Community Asset Transfer Policy and its supporting governance arrangements are recognised as being both progressive and proactive. They encourage a corporate approach to the use of community asset transfer as a driver for positive change that has the potential to deliver benefits not only for our communities, but also for the council itself.

The council's Transforming Your Council agenda includes a dedicated work stream entitled "Empowering Communities". The aim of that work stream is to encourage community groups to use asset transfer as a means of acquiring and operating community assets, including community centres, village halls and sports pavilions. That work stream is supported by staff resources and a significant, dedicated capital investment budget for community-led asset transfer projects.

Throughout the year and despite the effects of the Covid-19 healthcare emergency, officers have undertaken a series of online one-to-one meetings with a range of community groups, to provide an introduction and insight into community asset transfer and its benefits.

The council as members of the Association of Chief Estate Surveyors (ACES) have discussed community asset transfer with a view to sharing information and learning from good practice across the thirty two local authorities.

7. Support for Community Transfer Bodies making an Asset Transfer Request

The council's Asset Manager along with colleagues from Customer Services, Economic Development and Community Regeneration have met with a range of community groups to explain the principles of asset transfer and to discuss the provisions of the council's Community Asset Transfer Policy.

Officers have worked with these groups to understand their individual aspirations and to provide tailored advice as to how the groups might best take their respective projects forward, be it through asset transfer, participation requests or another model.

In some instances, this partnership working has led to arrangements being made without the need for a formal asset transfer request. Examples include the granting of “community benefit leases” to community groups for the use of sports pavilions and land for the creation of community gardens.

In other instances, officers have provided property-specific information (e.g. ownership plans, condition surveys or asbestos reports), given expert advice on the preparation of business plans and worked as link-officers signposting groups to other sources of external support and funding. As a result of that practical support, there are a number of community groups currently preparing the ground and actively undertaking due diligence in advance of submitting an asset transfer request.

Officers have also established a positive working relationship with the Community Ownership Support Service (COSS) and will continue to work in partnership with COSS both on the development and promotion of community asset transfer across West Lothian and on specific proposals presented by individual community groups.

Table 4 below provides details of the community groups that officers have engaged with during the reporting period.

Table 4: Record of Community Engagement (1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021)

COMMUNITY GROUP	SUBJECT PROPERTY
1. Empowering Communities: Community Centres	
West Calder Community Centre Management Association	West Calder Community Centre
Polbeth Community Hub	Polbeth Village Hall
2. Empowering Communities: Sports Pavilions	
Blackburn United Community Sports Club	Sports facilities at Murrayfield Park, Blackburn
Watson Memorial Bowling Club	Sports pavilion at Watson Park, Armadale
Armadale Community Football Club & Armadale Thistle	Sports facilities at Volunteer Park, Armadale
Whitburn Community Football Club	Sports facilities at KGV Park, Whitburn
The Friends of Kirkton Park	Sports pavilion at Kirkton Park, Bathgate
3. Community Asset Transfer: General Interests	
Fauldhouse & Breich Valley Community Development Trust	Former Eastfield Training Centre, Fauldhouse
Ladywell Good Neighbour Network	Former public house (The Ferns), Fernbank, Livingston

3. Community Asset Transfer: General Interests (continued)	
Craigshill Good Neighbourhood Network	Former Almondbank Library, Livingston
Broxburn Brass Band	99 East Main Street, Broxburn
The Larder	The Trindlyknowe Centre, Blackburn
Broxburn Community Council	Land or buildings in Broxburn
St. John's Church	The Low Port Centre, Linlithgow

8. Community Asset Transfer going forward

Going forward into the 2021/22 financial year and beyond, the council will continue to promote community asset transfer as an important means of delivering positive change across our communities. We will continue to support our communities, building capacity and developing confidence amongst those groups with an interest in asset transfer.

Our work on promoting asset transfer and our engagement with community bodies will support and link into the council's wider approach to Community Wealth Building and Local Place Plans.

In particular, we will continue to use our dedicated resources to take the Empowering Communities work stream forward and look forward to concluding the approved asset transfer of the former Eastfield Training Centre in Fauldhouse to Fauldhouse and Breich Valley Community Development Trust.

Officers continue to be heavily involved in a significant amount of "pre-application" enabling work across a range of community-led projects and it is anticipated this work will result in further asset transfer requests being received during 2021/22.

In accordance with approved policy, all asset transfer requests received by the council will be evaluated by the Community Asset Transfer Officer Board and reported to the Asset Transfer Committee for determination.

9 June 2021