

APPENDIX 1

WEST LOTHIAN COUNCIL COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23

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 Strategic Property Asset Manager as the Lead Officer for Community Asset Transfer and it covers the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

2. Community Asset Transfer Requests Received

The council received one community asset transfer request during the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023. That request is summarised in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Community Asset Transfer Requests received (1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023)

No.	Applicant	Subject Property	Proposed Use	Application Status
1.	Bathgate Community Development Trust	Former Bathgate Social Work Centre, 69 Whitburn Road, Bathgate	Music, arts and wellbeing hub	The application was refused by the Asset Transfer Committee on 27 February 2023

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 2022 to 31 March 2023.

One community asset transfer request was accepted by the council's Asset Transfer Committee during the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023. That asset transfer request was lodged in January 2022 (out with this reporting period) and determined, within the statutory timescale, in June 2022 (within this reporting period),

The council did not complete any community asset transfers in 2022/23 that transferred 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 received one application 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 2022 to 31 March 2023.

5. Appeals of Decisions Taken

There were no appeals to 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 2022 to 31 March 2023.

6. Promotion of the use of Community Asset Transfer Requests

The council's approved Community Asset Transfer Policy and its supporting governance arrangements are intended to be progressive and proactive. They aim to 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.

Asset transfer is considered to be a key enabler in the council's drive to promote community empowerment and community wealth-building and in supporting the corporate aim of modernising and rationalising the council's operational property portfolio. Officers have and continue to engage with a wide range of community groups on work streams specifically aimed at encouraging the transfer of community centres, village halls and sports pavilions into community control.

In April 2022, the council's Strategic Property Asset Manager delivered a presentation on Community Asset Transfer to Sportscotland's Executive Board at the National Sports Training Centre in Largs. The purpose of that presentation was to promote and provide insight into asset transfer in order that Sportscotland might be better placed to support clubs with asset transfer aspirations.

Officers have met with representatives from Just Enterprise to explore partnership working aimed at further promoting asset transfer and providing tailored practical support and capacity building to help community groups take projects forward towards a successful outcome.

The council's community asset transfer webpages are currently under review and are being redesigned and refreshed to provide an improved resource for our communities.

The council as members of the Association of Chief Estate Surveyors (ACES) has discussed community asset transfer with a view to sharing information and learning from good practice across the 32 local authorities. In January 2023, officers took part in the inaugural meeting of the Local Authority Community Asset Transfer Working Group and further meetings of that nationwide group will take place later in 2023 and beyond.

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

In November 2022 the council appointed its first dedicated Community Empowerment and Property Modernisation Officer. It is the role of that officer to promote community asset transfer, to engage with and support community organisations with asset transfer aspirations and to process community asset transfer requests received by the council.

Officers from a range of services, including Property Services, 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 signposted 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 2 below provides details of the community groups that officers have engaged with during the reporting period.

Table 2: Record of Community Engagement (1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023)

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
Crofthead Community Centre Management Association	Crofthead Community Centre, Livingston
2. Empowering Communities: Sports Facilities	
Armadale Community Football Club & Armadale Thistle Football Club	Sports facilities at Volunteer Park, Armadale
Whitburn Community Football Club	Sports facilities at KGV Park, Whitburn
Livingston and District Amateur Radio Society	Sports pavilions at Station Road, Broxburn and Maree Walk, Craigshill
Bathgate Amateur Weightlifting Club	Sports pavilion at Meadowpark, Bathgate
East Calder Community Football Club	Sports facilities at East Calder Partnership Centre
Glenmavis Bowling Club	Glenmavis Bowling Club, Bathgate
Bathgate Thistle Community Football Club	Sports pavilion at Meadowpark, Bathgate
Craigsfarm Community Hub	Pavilion at Maree Walk, Craigshill
Linlithgow Community Development Trust	West Lothian Cycle Circuit, Linlithgow
Mid Calder Bowling Club	Mid Calder Bowling Club
Murieston Tennis and Sports Club	Land at Murieston Valley, Livingston

3. Community Asset Transfer: General Interests	
Spark	Former Almondbank Library, Livingston
Livingston Community Shed	Facilities at Carmondean Community Centre, Livingston
Whitburn Community Development Trust	Former Whitburn Library, Whitburn
Community Action Blackburn	Former Hopefield Nursery, Blackburn
The Larder	The Trindlyknowe Centre, Blackburn
St. John's Church Linlithgow	The Low Port Centre, Linlithgow
Broxburn & Uphall Development Group	Strathbrock Community Garden, Broxburn
Polbeth Community Council	Site of the former West Calder High School
Deansmeadow Allotment Association	Deansmeadow Allotments, Livingston
Open Door	Opportunities across West Lothian

8. Community Asset Transfer going forward

Going forward into the 2023/24 financial year and beyond, the council will continue to promote community asset transfer as an important means of delivering positive change across our communities. Officers will support communities, building capacity and developing confidence amongst those groups with an interest in asset transfer.

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

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 by the council during 2023/24.

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 within statutory timescales.

20 June 2023