

REPORT FROM: CORPORATE DIRECTOR

TO: POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

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TRANSFER OF FACILITIES AND SERVICES TO TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To provide an update on progress with the programme.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) That the Corporate Director be authorised to agree terms for the transfer of Trawden Recreation Ground to Trawden Forest Parish Council.
- (2) That the Corporate Director be authorised to agree terms for an extended lease to Trawden Bowling Club.
- (3) That the Corporate Director be authorised to agree terms for the transfer of the land in front of Tyseley Grove to Earby Town Council.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

To take forward the Council's programme of transferring facilities and services to town and parish councils.

1. The Transfer of Facilities and Services to Town and Parish Councils programme commenced in 2014. The objectives are twofold. Firstly to ensure that facilities and services would remain under local control should Pendle Council cease to exist. Secondly to realise revenue savings for the Council, mainly on building and/or grounds maintenance costs.
2. Under it, the following have been transferred:
 - Festive decorations (all in the Borough)
 - Bus shelters (all except those in Nelson and Primesite shelters)
 - Roadside seats (all in the Borough)
 - Public conveniences (Barley, Newchurch, Barnoldswick, Barrowford, Earby, Laneshaw Bridge)

- Community Centres (Trawden, Brierfield, Barnoldswick Civic Hall, Colne (Primet), Nelson (Unity Hall))
 - Town halls (Colne, Brierfield)
 - Play areas and multi-use games areas (all except those in parks and those in Brierfield)
 - Miscellaneous pieces of land (usually amenity space)
 - Town centre CCTV (Nelson, Colne, Brierfield, Barnoldswick and Earby)
 - Parks (Letcliffe, Victory, Valley Gardens, Alkincoates, Barrowford including Pendle Heritage Centre)
 - Sports pitches (Earby)
 - Youth hostel (Earby)
 - Bus turnarounds (Barley, Trawden)
 - Enhanced rights of way (countryside access) service
3. At the meeting in September 2021 the Committee identified the following for the next phase of the programme and invited the town and parish councils concerned to consider them and to put forward other suggestions:
- Remaining parks (Sough, Heyhead, Marsden, Victoria, Walverden, Ball Grove)
 - Town centre sweeping (Nelson, Colne, Brierfield, Barnoldswick, Earby, Barrowford)
 - Local car parks (Barnoldswick, Brierfield, Colne and Earby; not Nelson at this time due to Town Deal considerations)
 - Cemeteries (Colne, Nelson, Barrowford, Earby, Ghyll, Salterforth)
 - Market (Colne)
 - Municipal Hall (Colne)
 - Sports pitches (Nelson, Colne, Barrowford, Brierfield, Barnoldswick, Trawden)
 - Miscellaneous pieces of land
4. Town and parish councils' representatives were advised that other arrangements could be considered as well as outright transfer e.g. a financial contribution in return for a greater say in the operation of the service or Pendle or the parish acting as an agent for the other etc.
5. Further meetings with individual councils were offered to discuss the items in the list. Some councils declined the offer. Some did take it up but the meetings led to little in the way of agreement. More detailed information follows below.

Parks

6. Sough Park is partly in the area of Earby Town council and partly in the area of Kelbrook and Sough parish council. Neither has indicated a wish to take a transfer of the park. Both make a voluntary contribution towards the Council's cost of maintenance which is the subject of negotiation each year.
7. Heyhead Park is in the area of Brierfield Town Council. The Town Council is not willing to take a transfer but does make a voluntary contribution of the full cost of maintenance.
8. Marsden, Victoria and Walverden Parks are in the area of Nelson Town Council. There have been several attempts in recent years to agree their transfer but these have not come to fruition. The Town Council makes a voluntary contribution towards the Council's cost of maintenance which is the subject of negotiation each year.

9. Ball Grove Park is in the area of Trawden Forest parish council. Transfer is imminent with initial agreement for the Council to continue carrying out the maintenance in return for reimbursement of the cost.

Town centre sweeping

10. None of the Town Councils showed an interest in taking this on.

Local Car Parks

11. None of the Town Councils showed an interest in taking over local car parks.

Cemeteries

12. None of the Town Councils showed an interest in taking over cemeteries.

Colne Market

13. This is now the subject of the Levelling Up award of funding for Colne and the future of the market and surrounding area is now in the planning stage. This would seem to rule out the possibility of transfer in the immediate future

Colne Municipal Hall

14. Colne Town Council has previously shown an interest in taking over this but is not pursuing it currently. A complication is that it is leased by the Council to Pendle Leisure Trust. Under the Levelling Up award of funding for Colne the building is due to undergo major refurbishment. This would seem to rule out the possibility of transfer in the immediate future.

Sports Pitches

15. Apart from Trawden Forest none of the councils showed an interest in taking over sports pitches. Trawden Forest have now revived their interest in taking over the Recreation Ground which they would propose managing via a management committee of user group representatives such as Trawden Celtic FC and Trawden Show Committee.
16. If the transfer were to go ahead the Council would lose about £700 per annum in pitch hire charges. Current grounds maintenance costs are in the region of £1000.
17. It is recommended that approval in principle to transfer be given and that negotiations be held with the parish council.

Miscellaneous pieces of land

18. The relevant town and parish councils were provided with lists of miscellaneous pieces of land i.e. those with little or no development value and used for amenity purposes.
19. Firm interest shown was by Earby Town Council in respect of land at Aspen Lane, the transfer of which was approved at the last meeting of this Committee.
20. Earby Town Council also showed interest in taking over land in front of Tyseley Grove and discussions are continuing on this.

21. Although not on the list of miscellaneous pieces of land Trawden Forest Parish Council has expressed an interest in taking the freehold of the Trawden Forest Bowling Green and car park. The Council currently leases to the Bowling Club with approximately 10 years remaining at a peppercorn rent.
22. The Parish Council's stated reason for this is "to safeguard the club and land". This can be achieved by granting an extended term of the lease to the Club. It is recommended that negotiations on this take place with the Club.

Conclusions

23. The programme has now been running for eight years. To a considerable extent its objectives have been achieved. The Council has either been relieved of significant maintenance and running costs or is receiving significant contributions to them. Where transfer has not been achieved loss of local control remains a possibility though local government reorganisation is not high on the Government's agenda at present.
24. Some of the services in the list approved in September 2021 present complexities for both the Council and the relevant town council. Transferring some or all cemeteries, sports pitches or town centre sweeping facilities would present challenges for the town councils in managing them and could lead to the break- up of service units in Environmental Services.
25. The Council is in the process of reviewing car parks and also looking to prepare Masterplans for town centres and may prefer to retain some under its control.
26. Operating a major leisure facility like Colne Municipal Hall would be a major undertaking for the Town Council.
27. Ultimately any future progress would depend on the resources and ambition of the town councils.

IMPLICATIONS

Policy: The Council has a longstanding policy of transferring facilities and services to town and parish councils. The intentions behind the policy are to ensure local ownership and control in the event of reorganisation of local government and to reduce the Council's running costs.

Financial: Where parks, play areas and MUGAs which have been transferred, the town or parish council has an agreement with the Council for it to undertake maintenance and inspection in return for reimbursement of the cost. The exceptions are Colne Town Council in respect of Alkincoats park and the play areas in its area, and a handful of small parish councils with a single play area where the local council has made alternative arrangements with a private contractor.

Where they have not been transferred the town or parish councils are making voluntary contributions to the costs of maintenance.

Legal: Legal documentation is put in place to formalise transfers and agreements on maintenance liabilities and costs.

Risk Management: None arising from this report.

Health and Safety: None arising from this report.

Sustainability: None arising from this report.

Community Safety: None arising from this report.

Equality and Diversity: None arising from this report.

APPENDICES

None

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

None