

Cabinet

3 November 2020

Property Strategy & Asset Management Plan

For Decision

Portfolio Holder: Cllr T Ferrari, Economic Growth, Assets & Property

Local Councillor(s): All

Executive Director: J Sellgren, Executive Director of Place

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Report Status: Public

Recommendation: That Cabinet: -

1. Agree the Property Strategy & Asset Management Plan attached to this report at Appendix 3
2. Agree the Action Plan attached to this report at Appendix 4
3. Allocate a budget of £250k to be funded from Capital Receipts for feasibility studies and other exploratory works the cost of which will be apportioned to individual schemes and recovered should the project be developed out or asset sold with planning permission.

Reason for Recommendation:

Like a number of local authorities throughout the country the Council faces significant financial challenges coupled with pressures on its services, particularly, as the population ages and the demand for housing (namely affordable housing) increases.

The Council's property portfolio is extremely diverse and multi-faceted comprising a wide variety of assets. The use of property impacts on every aspect of the Council's activities and as such is an inherent part of the Council's plan and a key component in ensuring the Council achieves its goals. As such it is essential that the Council takes a holistic view of its asset base and 'adopts a one Council' co-ordinated approach to its management to ensure that it is effectively, efficiently and safety managed, it is fit for purpose and able to meet

the needs of its service users whilst at the same time ensuring that the value/potential value of the estate is fully realised.

The effective use of the asset base will help enable the Council to meet its social and financial challenges through asset disposals, generation of capital receipts, savings in costs through the reduction, rationalisation and improved efficiency of the estate and more importantly the generation of value through income generation and the repurposing, redirecting and reuse of land and buildings for housing, schools and other essential service needs.

The Property Strategy & Asset Management Plan is a key component of the Council's transformation strategy in order to help services meet their changing service needs and assisting the council in meeting its statutory obligations, its social and economic aspirations whilst at the same making a significant contribution to overcoming the financial challenges that it faces.

This report outlines how the Council will determine the future shape of its estate and how it will be managed. It sets out for approval a strategy that will provide for a framework for decision making based on a clear set of principles and mechanisms by which the future use of individual and classes of assets within the property portfolio will be considered together with a clear action plan with regard to the reshaping and re-purposing of the Estate.

1. Executive Summary

The Council has a wide and diverse variety of property interests geographically spread throughout and across Dorset.

The Council Plan identifies that the effective utilisation of the Council's property assets forms one of the six transformational programmes that the council is undertaking.

The Council's primary aims are to: -

- Rationalise the property estate, reduce costs and identify assets that are suitable for disposal or redevelopment
- To improve the condition of the estate and reduce its environmental impact
- Adapt the council's office accommodation in order to alter its estate and modernise its workspace to meet the needs of future agile working and the aims of the Dorset Workplace
- To seek to maximise the value of the estate by creating income generation opportunities, disposing of or repurposing poor performing assets in order to create greater social, commercial and economic returns

In addition, the Council aims to build on the principles of 'One Public Estate' programme and work in collaboration with other public sector partners to utilise assets to: -

- Create economic growth (new homes and jobs)
- Deliver more integrated customer focused services through joint provision
- Generate efficiencies through capital receipts and reduced running costs

As one of the largest land and property owners within Dorset it is recognised that the Council is in a unique position to work with partners to lead and deliver strategic regeneration and that significant potential exists within its property base which can be used to help meet the Council's housing targets and the financial challenges the Council faces, in particular, from an ageing population.

In order both to achieve its wider goals and in the face of continual financial pressures the Council needs to review the size, efficiency and occupation of both its operational and commercial estate and have a clear mechanism, rationale and process for determining property need, the best use of property and ensuring it achieves best value from its estate through disposal or re-development of assets.

As part of its strategy the Council will either utilise its own resources, consider different delivery models or work in partnership/collaboration with others where appropriate and in such circumstances that will allow the Council to generate greater returns and benefits, mitigate risks and access resource and expertise in order for projects to come forward at a greater scale and pace over the coming three to five years.

2. Financial Implications

Through the rationalisation of the property estate and the re-provisioning of existing assets the Council will be able to generate not only efficiency savings and capital receipts but also generate income and both commercial and social value through the repurposing and redirection of the existing estate in order to meet the Council's social, economic and financial needs and aims.

3. Climate implications

The Council has declared a climate and ecological emergency and is committed to taking direct action to reduce the negative environmental impact of our services.

Included within the Council's Draft Climate & Ecological Emergency Strategy is a Buildings & Built Assets Detailed Technical Paper which has established a series of objectives and an action plan for the estate to ensure that it becomes zero carbon by 2040.

The Property Strategy and Asset Management Plan recognises the above objectives and as part of any Asset Review and new Council developments will

work to implement the necessary actions in order to reach the Council's carbon-reduction target.

4. Other Implications

The implementation of the Dorset Workplace, any possible office closures or changes together with the implementation of new or different ways of working may require employee and Trade Union consultation.

In addition, certain changes particularly those that may affect or impact on service or other public provision may also require public consultation.

Acquisitions, disposals and the creation of any form of joint venture or new legal entity will require Legal and Finance input.

5. Risk Assessment

Having considered the risks associated with this decision, the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Low

Residual Risk: Low

6. Equalities Impact Assessment

It is envisaged that there will be a series of individual projects that will emanate from this strategy. As individual projects are developed and brought forward for approval a separate EQIA will be prepared for each.

7. Place & Resources Scrutiny Committee

On the 29th September the Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director of Property & Assets which set out the approach and methodology to be used as the basis for the review of the Council's assets and the basis for determining the future shape and size of the estate.

An extract from the minutes of that meeting detailing the points arising as a result of the discussions that took place is attached at Appendix 1.

It was decided that the Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee support the approach and methodology to be used as the basis for the review of assets and the basis for determining the future shape and size of the estate.

8. Appendices

- Appendix 1 Place & Resources Scrutiny Committee Minute Extract

- Appendix 2 The Dorset Council Property Estate
- Appendix 3 Property Strategy & Asset Management Plan
- Appendix 4 Property & Asset Management Strategy Action Plan

9. Background Papers

- The Dorset Council Plan 2020-2024
- Blueprint for Change
- Draft Climate & Ecological Emergency Strategy
- Draft Economic Growth Strategy
- Building Better Lives
- Local Waste Plan

10. Background

- 10.1 In 2019 Avison Young were commissioned following Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) to undertake a review of the Estate.
- 10.2 They identified that the Authority owned or leased 1,409 property assets (land and buildings) consisting of 36 different classifications of assets and distributed across 22 locations throughout the county. 322 of these are located in Weymouth, 169 in Dorchester, 133 in Bridport and 118 in Wimborne. These are identified at Appendix 1.
- 10.3 As at 1st April 2020 the Property portfolio has a capital value of £463m.
- 10.4 The Council owns a total of 608 sites which have buildings on them for which it is responsible (excluding schools).
- 10.5 The Council's gross property costs as reported in its 2019/20 accounts are £14.34m and net after allowing for income etc is £2.85m. These figures do not include for those residential property costs incurred by Adults, Housing or Children's Services for permanent and temporary accommodation as part of commissioned services.
- 10.6 The Council's estimated backlog maintenance costs for its estate in total are in the region of £37m of which 65% is schools related. The maintenance backlog is categorised in terms of risk and priority and 'in year' budgets targeted to ensure that all essential works are undertaken, buildings are fully compliant from a health and safety perspective as well as being maintained to a reasonable standard.
- 10.7 The property portfolio can be broken down into two main elements namely Commercial Assets of which there are 355 from which it earns income from third parties and Operational Assets (including any heritage

and community assets) for the provision of services which consists of 1,054 assets.

10.8 Avison Young broke these two groups down further into the following four sub portfolio's or groups: -

- Assets supporting locality based direct service delivery or access to services. The council has c217 assets that fall into this category namely administrative offices, leisure buildings, libraries, community centres, youth centres, adult learning centres, family centres, day centres, residential homes and public conveniences.
- Assets supporting specialist council services namely housing, depots, cemeteries and crematoria, archives, outdoor education centres of which there are c200 assets
- Assets serving market and or coastal towns and the economy. The council has in excess of 400 land based assets that play an important role in supporting the economic health of Dorset's market and coastal towns serving shoppers, visitors and tourists and directly supporting employment with a particular focus on agriculture. These include 133 car parks, harbours, recreational facilities, 48 County farms, 118 industrial Units, 61 Hotels and 34 retail and Commercial Units.
- Other Assets including 116 land parcels, 4 Gypsy and Traveller sites, 25 Infrastructure assets, 32 Garages, 5 Access Rights and 13 miscellaneous assets.

10.9 As part of the work to develop the Property Strategy and Asset Management Plan, further and more detailed work has and is being undertaken looking at the individual categories within the above portfolio's and considering future use in accordance with the framework below.

11. Approach to Developing the Strategy & Plan

Information

- 11.1 A significant amount of work was undertaken at the time of LGR consolidating assets and pulling these together into a single Asset Register. This data was reviewed as part of the work undertaken by Avison Young and is being subsequently cleansed and re-profiled/re-categorised as part of the property review that formed the basis of the plan. In addition, an analysis of the Council's property costs, in particular, its backlog maintenance costs together with projected costs going forward is ongoing and will help inform the review of a number of assets and categories of assets within the portfolio.
- 11.2 Access to accurate and effective management information is an essential component in ensuring the property portfolio is proactively managed and

also to highlight repair and maintenance issues including the requirement for any capital expenditure which will improve asset value, prolong asset life, generate increased income or identify excessive and long term problems or issues. As a result of being able to capture the performance and cost information a series of benchmarks will be established such as gross property running costs, net property running costs, maintenance backlog, energy rating, premises utilisation which will help determine the long term viability of assets. The upgrading of the Council's property and asset management software is ongoing and essential in this regard.

Service Planning & Property Requirements

- 11.3 The property requirements needed to maintain and improve services sit at the heart of the process. Services will develop outline property requirements upon which decisions can be made about which property best suits those needs. Services will be asked to advise on the area in which they need to be located, in accordance, with the regionalisation plans, along with the space, type and other requirements of the building which can be used to build an area by area strategy for consolidation. These requirements will be critiqued to take into account occupancy, usage, building cost, duplication etc.
- 11.4 Individual Service Plans and strategies will set out the needs and requirements for each function and its model or models of delivery which will then help determine the asset base required in order to ensure successful delivery. A key determining factor, therefore, in determining the size and shape of the estate is ensuring there are sufficient assets of the right type available to meet service needs subject to ensuring that the assets are well used, cost effective and whether greater value can be created through re-purposing or disposal.

Spatial Planning & Socio-Economic Analysis

- 11.5 In order to understand the background and context to the plan, work previously undertaken with regard to master planning exercises in Weymouth, Dorchester and Ferndown have been considered which will be supplemented with a review of the Wimborne estate. In addition data collated as part of strategic housing market assessment exercises across Dorset has helped identify housing needs and provide a flavour for the priorities and pressures the council faces.
- 11.6 A spatial approach will be taken to identifying those assets within redevelopment areas. Where assets fall within such area's assets will need to be assessed to determine how best they might be utilised to deliver any priority outcomes taking into account regeneration and deliver housing opportunities and how they might be delivered together

with the model of delivery. In such instance's consideration will be given to whether the Council is a majority or minority landowner, the level of risk etc.

- 11.7 Any potential disposal, relocation or redevelopment will consider the impact and benefits to local communities

The Office Estate

- 11.8 The Council employs around 4,500 people (excluding schools based staff) of which 3,000 work from office environments either for all or part of their time. The majority of these staff are located in Dorchester and this is where the bulk of the desk capacity is currently located.
- 11.9 The asset register and the Avison Young study shows that the Council owns and leases 64 offices and administration buildings of which 7 to date have been identified as surplus to requirements, 16 are leased entirely third parties, 17 are leased/licensed from other NHS bodies at no cost as space is reciprocated within Council buildings, 9 offices are occupied by a single service within the Council, 14 are multi-functional offices occupied by the Council and there is 1 Weymouth office on a long lease. The Council's primary focus is to rationalise, consolidate and reduce further the 24 offices which it currently occupies. It should be noted, however, that within these numbers County Hall is made up of three sites (County Hall, South Annexe and East Annexe), the history Centre is also included although it has limited office space and that the 3 Harbour authority offices have also been included.
- 11.10 Whilst the concepts of 'hot desking' and agile working have been introduced in a number of organisations in recent years changes to technology and access to information has allowed for work to be done differently and more flexibly. More recently the necessary response to the Covid 19 pandemic have accelerated and accentuated this and has presented the need to work remotely in different ways. This has brought about a change at a rate that previously could not have been imagined, both in working practices and to attitudes staff and managers had about working remotely. This has been reflected in recent staff feedback from surveys and various forums and as reflected in recent discussions with senior managers when discussing future service requirements.
- 11.11 Property formed one of the workstreams within the Dorset Workplace and the review and work undertaken by the Administrative Offices team informed a major element of the paper presented to Cabinet in October on the Dorset Workplace
- 11.12 Prior to Covid following LGR work had already commenced on a review

of the office estate and as a result the leases at Allenvie House in Wimborne and Princes House in Dorchester are being terminated in 2021 in accordance with the lease break provisions. In addition, a review of a number of options with regard to South Walks House is currently being considered.

- 11.13 A fundamental driver in the review of the office estate is to undertake a further process of consolidation of services into fewer, better properties that reflect the requirement for Children's and Adult services in particular to operate closer to the communities to which they serve and as such the need to create a regional multi-purpose office network in 4/5 locations throughout Dorset.

Local Co-Location & Collaboration

- 11.14 The sharing of premises with other public sector bodies is also desirable and in line with the principles of the 'one public estate' although it should be noted that there are a number of locations where the Council's Adult Care Services and the NHS are co-located currently. There is currently a number of exploratory discussions being undertaken with a number of public sector bodies with regard to the sharing of existing office space and facilities

Dorchester Office Estate

- 11.15 Dorchester is the administrative hub for the Council where the majority of its administrative activities take place and as such the Council owns and leases a number of buildings.
- 11.16 As part of the review of the office estate a review of County Hall has been undertaken supported by consultants from the Capital Markets and Development Division of Knight Frank. This exercise was based on a similar piece of work undertaken on behalf of the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea in the early part of 2020.
- 11.17 In addition other administrative locations within Dorchester including South Walks House will form part of a wider review taking account of the benefits of more agile working and any changes in service provision. The outcome of this exercise with regard to the Council's office needs within Dorchester and its future strategy will be the subject of a separate cabinet paper.

Other Studies & Reviews

11.18 A number of individual cross functional working groups have been established consisting of representatives from relevant Service Areas to look at and review the following areas:

- Operational Depots
- Administrative Offices
- Leisure Centres
- Individual elements of the Commercial Estate

Further groups where appropriate and necessary will be and are being established to review individual or particular asset categories. These groups will be supported where necessary by external expertise to challenge as well as support any aspect of the review.

11.19 The work undertaken by the Leisure and Administrative Offices Group has helped inform the 'Leisure Services Review' and 'Dorset Workplace' papers that were considered by cabinet in October.

Third Party Leases

11.20 The Council has inherited as part of LGR a number of leases that had been entered into by predecessor Council's relating to buildings for operational and administrative use and for buildings that it owns which have been let to third parties.

11.21 As a matter of principle, wherever possible and at the earliest opportunity the Council will seek to terminate such leases associated with buildings that it is renting for administrative and operational purposes on the proviso that dependent on need the Council can accommodate the service utilising such buildings within its existing wholly owned estate. Consideration will be given to surrendering a lease early and paying a premium where it is financially viable to do so and a clear annual revenue saving will materialise.

11.22 There are a number of commercial leases that have been previously agreed by predecessor Councils whereby in exchange for a premium payment the Council entered into a long lease of 125 years or more (virtual freeholds) at a peppercorn rent. Such leases limit the Council's opportunities to influence or direct the use of particular sites unless the lease is re-acquired. Should the Council perceive there is a strategic or commercial rationale to buy back a lease a business case to pursue such an option would need to be prepared and approved in accordance with the Council's processes and procedures.

Approach Outcomes

- 11.23 Arising from the Property Strategy and Asset Management Plan will be a series of individual strategies, development projects, acquisitions or disposals focused on particular assets or groups of assets which will align themselves to the Council's Draft Economic Growth Strategy, Draft Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy together with the Draft Local Plan, Waste Local Plan, future Housing Strategy and key service strategies namely Children's 'Blueprint for Change' and Adult Services 'Building Better Lives'.
- 11.24 Following a review of the Property Portfolio within each service area and the agreement of a plan and set of priorities with the service and the relevant Portfolio Holder each strategy will be brought forward to cabinet with a recommendation or series of recommendations for approval based upon the 4 Box Model with an options appraisal and viability analysis where appropriate as described below and set out within the Property Strategy.

12. Disposals

- 12.1 The Council's plans for disposals has been severely disrupted as a result of Covid and the proposed programme has been subject to significant delays and changes.
- 12.2 The Council have previously adopted a process, whereby, any asset sale is agreed subject to planning approval. An analysis of this approach has shown that in all cases the initial agreed sales price has not been met either as result of planning or viability issues arising. The process in terms of timescales have generally taken longer than originally envisaged given the dependency on the proposed purchaser to obtain consent and the time it takes to resolve issues that arise. In addition, in a number of schemes the development has not achieved the desired affordable content.
- 12.3 Over the period between an agreement to sell and its completion the assets remain the responsibility of the Council and during this period the Council incurs holding costs associated with security, council tax/business rates etc. Holding costs currently are in the region of £450k per annum.
- 12.4 Given the above going forward it is proposed that unless there is little or no benefit associated with redevelopment the Council should undertake a viability assessment and at that point will decide whether to seek either outline or full planning permission prior to making a decision as to whether to dispose of or redevelop an asset. The adoption of this approach will

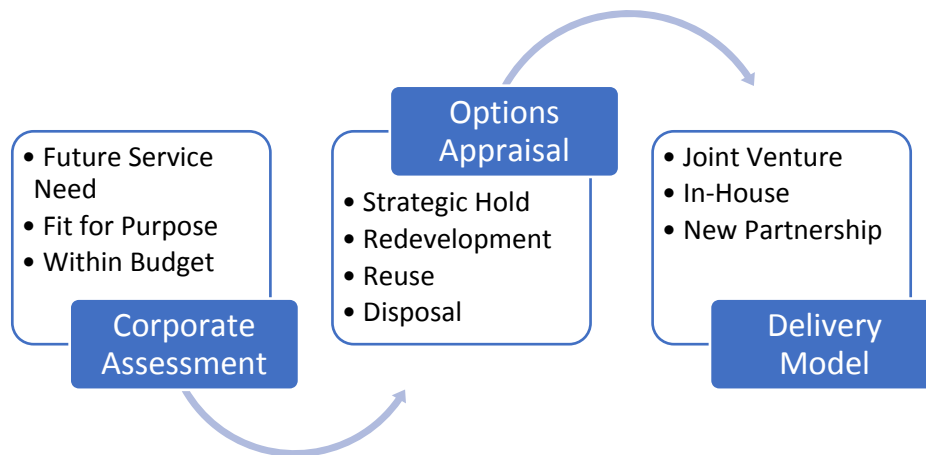
allow the Council to exert greater influence over the development in terms of timescales, tenure, affordable content and environmental impact

13. Asset Review & 4 Box Model

13.1 The Property & Asset Strategy attached at Appendix 3 sets out the process through which the future use of assets will be assessed. The key to this is for the property team to understand the overall operational service requirements for the Council in the future as well as understanding the aims and aspirations of the Council. This is the basis of being able to develop a new operational estate and to plan for either new requirements or for the future use of surplus assets in good time.

13.2 By ensuring engagement between property and the services, planning for any changes can happen as early as possible which will help reduce the amount of time a property is vacant, plan for future use, reduce and keep holding costs to a minimum.

13.3 This process is set out in the table below: -



13.4 The principle underlying this process should be that the Council retains an asset only if: -

- It is identified as having/could have development potential within the local plan or within a realistic timetable (deliverability)
- It can be re-let/intensified for revenue generation
- The Council wishes to develop the site itself
- It has strategic value
- Sites will unlock a development in future (within a specific timescale)

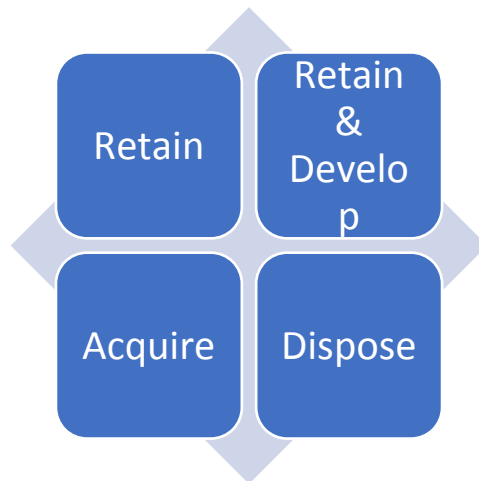
- There is an identified viable service requirement where the building will be fully utilised
- The assets are determined as being a core Council requirement and part of a core Council service
- Services cannot be reasonably be provided from any other facility/facilities both within the Council estate or those of its public sector partners or within the Commercial market at a lower cost

13.5 The proposal is that the Council should not continue to hold assets that do not meet one of these criteria

13.6 Assets that are high cost/low performance or yield should be prioritised through this process to ensure that best value is delivered at all times to residents.

13.7 It is expected that there will be considerable opportunities across the asset portfolio for redevelopment or disposal and that given the location, type and connectivity of sites the vast majority will be best suited to residential redevelopment. The Council will look to develop a revenue stream to support future services and to develop a housing portfolio to provide affordable housing but also to reduce future Council costs through a targeted, self-funding development programme.

13.8 Following a review of the estate, assets can usually be categorised and fall within one of four boxes: -



13.9 It is envisaged that the number of corporate/operational facilities that the Council retains and maintains will decrease overtime as the office base and other sites are rationalised going forward.

13.10 It is also recognised that the Council may always have a need to acquire other assets particularly where there is nothing in the portfolio

that can meet a particular need although it is envisaged that these will be 'few and far between'.

- 13.11 Whilst asset disposals remain an option for the Council it is envisaged that increased focus will be on retaining sites and developing these for primarily housing purposes either directly or through a joint venture relationship with a view to realising both the Council's commercial and social ambitions.

14. Future Development Pipeline

- 14.1 Arising from the asset review, the Council will create lists of future development schemes, prioritise these schemes based on speed, extent of delivery, revenue income, meeting housing demand and economic development objectives.
- 14.2 Using the review process, it will also determine the best delivery method for the development including: -
- Direct Delivery
 - Joint ventures
 - Collaboration agreements with other Public Sector Partners
- 14.3 This will create a future pipeline of deliverable schemes with clear benefits in terms of capital/revenue income generation and homes/jobs creation.
- 14.4 The Council is keen to support the delivery of affordable housing across Dorset and to this end where the Council sells land or develops land and buildings for new homes and where viability allows it is committed to ensuring that all schemes meet the affordable housing requirement/targets.
- 14.5 In addition there is an opportunity for the Council to reduce its costs by targeting new developments in such a way to meet the needs of the Council in offsetting the growth of its ageing population and to increase its revenue income streams to support services in future with the development of residential property.

15. Corporate Landlord Model

- 15.1 In reviewing the various approaches to Property and Asset Management consideration has been given to the different approaches taken by other Local Authorities particularly with regard to the 'Corporate Landlord' model.

- 15.2 A number of Local Authorities have adopted 'Corporate Landlord' models in accordance with CIPFA (The Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy) recommendations and guidance.
- 15.3 The Council has gone some way towards implementing a Corporate Landlord Model informally in that there is one property function which manages the assets and asset related budgets. However, in many cases departments are still very involved in property related matters meaning that decision making about future property use is undertaken by different groups across the Council. Adopting this approach will allow for decision making to be improved, reduce any lost opportunities and make best use of available resources.
- 15.4 In order for a property strategy to be successful and for the Council to deliver its ambitions, decisions about the best use of assets, the approach to property development, project delivery, acquisitions and disposals must be made centrally based on the principles and processes laid out in the strategy. It is therefore recommended to fully implement the corporate landlord model with a property function that has the ability to properly manage the portfolio to deliver efficiencies, savings, income and value (both commercial and social).
- 15.5 The corporate landlord model is intended to enable a Council to utilise its assets to deliver better, more efficient services: -
- to unlock the value of assets, seek efficiencies and where possible work with other public sector partners
 - to integrate thinking about property with financial, regeneration and other considerations
- 15.6 It is the predominant asset management model used by large private sector organisations and is increasingly used in local government.
- 15.7 Under a corporate landlord approach the ownership of the asset and the responsibility of its management, maintenance and funding are centralised. The service department then makes a case for the property they wish to change or use, enabling the corporate landlord to properly plan and manage space the Council needs, in the right locations.
- 15.8 The service department's priority is therefore to plan and deliver the service and the corporate landlord's function is to ensure the service is suitably accommodated and to plan, manage and maintain the asset in order to ensure it, not only, meets service needs but also the wider commercial and social requirements of the Council.

16 Residential Property & Other Delivery Models

- 16.1 It is proposed that the Council irrespective of whether it was to develop or sell its assets would be responsible either in its own right or through a nominated entity with which it may work for achieving the necessary planning approvals and stipulating the necessary caveats and conditions for any onward sales.
- 16.2 This strategy is proposing that the Council takes more control of any proposed developments on its land which will generate greater guaranteed social and commercial value together with flexibility of use from the development of its assets within a shorter timeframe.
- 16.3 The exact extent and level of control may range from do nothing and merely obtain planning permission to dispose of an asset to taking responsibility for and acting as the Developer or joint venture partner for a project or series of projects. This decision will depend on the nature of the project, its size and scale, complexity and risk and the level of social and commercial returns that each or series of projects may offer.
- 16.4 A number of local authorities have set up their own development companies in order to build a mixture of housing for private sale and affordable rent on Council land with the former helping to subsidise the latter. Consideration of such an approach would be subject to a separate decision and cabinet paper.
- 16.5 Through taking control of the property through its lifecycle, will enable the Council to influence to a greater extent developments that meet its housing needs and developments that can reenergise the local environment whilst generating greater social and commercial returns in order to meet the financial challenges it faces.
- 16.6 It is recognised, however, that the Council particularly in higher risk, more complex, regeneration type projects will need to establish and create different delivery models and will need to collaborate and partner with others in order to access resources, expertise and to mitigate risk

17. Asset Management

- 17.1 A key part of the corporate landlord model is that once the Council has determined it wishes to retain a property there must be a clear maintenance and investment plan. The Council will develop a robust, proactive asset management plan for each of its assets and for its portfolio in its entirety, determining and prioritising investment requirements in order to ensure all properties meet health and safety and other legislative

requirements, as well as being fit for purpose for their continued and future use.

18. Commercial Portfolio

- 18.1 The Council holds a commercial portfolio of approximately 355 property assets generating rental income of c£4.25m per annum (excluding any rental income associated with care facilities).
- 18.2 Of these assets 226 (63%) fall within just 4 categories: -
- 62 Hotels & Holiday Parks
 - 53 Farms
 - 118 Industrial Units
 - 34 Retails Units
- 18.3 Not only does the Property team manage the estate but also supports the management activities associated with the Dorset Innovation Park.
- 18.4 The key objectives of the portfolio are not only to generate a commercial return and positive cashflows but to actively manage the estate to minimise risk, ensure a good quality mix of tenants to invest in and support the local economy whilst providing opportunities for start-up businesses as well as training opportunities.
- 18.5 Where appropriate assets will be sold or re-purposed where they are under performing or where greater social and commercial returns can be generated. New investment will be considered where opportunities exist that can provide a solid return and reliable cashflows or where an investment is considered strategic to allow for future growth opportunities or protection of existing investments. Such opportunities will be treated on a 'case by case' basis and judged on individual merit.

19. Performance Reporting Governance

- 19.1 The Council will require good reporting to develop a framework on the status of its property projects and assets and it is imperative that senior officers and members have visibility of this to enable good decision making and to resolve issues, as well as being able to communicate effectively on the status of projects with wider partners where necessary.
- 19.2 To enable this a performance dashboard model process will be established to enable reporting against the whole asset base.
- 19.3 It is proposed that the dashboard be implemented from April 2021 and will be refined through the rest of the financial year to ensure a robust monitoring and performance regime is in place.

19.4 Furthermore as part of the Council's more general performance monitoring of the overall estate measures need to be put in place to monitor consolidation, rationalisation and income generation and include amongst other things: -

- Revenue cost savings
- Reduction in backlog maintenance
- Capital receipts generated

As well as measures relating to energy and utility performance as part of the tracking of sustainability performance.

20. Resourcing

20.1 In order for the Council to deliver its property programmes at pace appropriate resources are required and internal resources repurposed and re-organised to reflect the new priorities.

20.2 Before determining, however, whether a site is feasible, commercially viable or practicable to take forward further site work, assessments and modelling are required all of which requires some form of 'seed funding' or initial investment.

20.3 It is estimated that to complete a feasibility study (inclusive of any professional fees) and to complete the planning process (including pre application discussions and planning fees), may cost in the region of an average of £40k per site and as such an initial budget of £250k is requested to initially undertake around 6/7 studies (although this may be more or less depending on scheme size and complexity). Monies would be allocated against identified projects or schemes and credited back in the event the scheme is built out or sold with planning permission to allow for the monies to be recycled and further projects/studies to be undertaken.

20.4 As mentioned previously access to accurate and effective management information is an essential component in ensuring that the property portfolio is proactively managed, compliant with regard to health and safety and integral in terms of improving asset life and monitoring commercial income. It is essential, therefore, that the Council's property management systems are of a quality and standard to ensure that they can support the work of the property team. Following LGR the existing Technology Forge system was upgraded to allow for the consolidation of all the management information from the former Districts into it, some work of which is still ongoing. It is envisaged that over the next two years a small investment will be required to replace or further upgrade this system.

21 Partnership Working

- 21.1 Building on established relationships and as part of the 'one public estate' programme closer working with other public sector bodies such as the various health organisations and the emergency services to seek to share and utilise more efficiently the public estate is seen as a key priority with the Council playing a key part in this across Dorset.
- 21.2 In addition closer collaboration with the Town and Parish Councils to share space and explore opportunities will be beneficial in driving down costs, identifying development opportunities and potentially generating income.

22. Summary & Conclusion

- 22.1 The Council Plan identifies that effective utilisation of the Council's property assets form one of the six transformational programmes that the Council is undertaking.
- 22.2 The Property Strategy & Asset Management Plan seeks to set out a framework for decision making for how the Council can utilise its assets to unlock opportunities for housing, provide opportunities for economic growth and regeneration, support community initiatives, generate savings and income in order to protect services and deliver greater financial and social returns.
- 22.3 By taking greater control of the future use of its assets it is envisaged that the Council will be able to generate greater social and commercial benefits in a much shorter time frame than currently being achieved.
- 22.4 The exact extent and level of control can be determined on a project by project basis dependent upon the nature of the project, its size and scale, its complexity and risk and the social and commercial benefits that they bring.

Footnote:

Issues relating to financial, legal, environmental, economic and equalities implications have been considered and any information relevant to the decision is included within the report

Appendix 1

Extract from minutes of Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee – 29 September 2020

Property Strategy and Asset Management Methodology Report

The committee received and considered a report of the Corporate Director of Property and Assets which set out the approach and methodology to be used as the basis for the review of the council's assets and the basis for determining the future shape and size of the estate. In addition to the report, the committee received a presentation in order to provide further detail on the key issues which included the impact of the current situation with Covid-19 in this area.

The Chairman highlighted to the committee that this report was in relation to the methodology around the council's asset management plan and did not go into detail of specific assets held by the council.

The committee considered the issues arising from the report and presentation and during discussion, the following points were raised:

- In response to a question, the Corporate Director noted that local access was an important element in the service strategy and that this needed to be reflected in the council's property portfolio. The example of Children's Services was provided where the service was looking for a more local presence
- A recent review of leisure services and subsequent report to Cabinet included work with the service to understand the best way to utilise assets in this area
- Reference was made to county farms which were a valuable, revenue generating asset for the council. All assets would be reviewed but as a general rule there would be a wish to continue where assets were generating revenue
- An example was provided of a third party lease where there would be a choice as to whether this was reviewed or exited and other elements which were driven by the ability to vacate a premise. There was a need to prioritise where the council could achieve the greatest value
- The council's office estate would be included in the review
- A point was made that there needed to be a clear timetable for this work with targets as to when reports would be made and decisions taken. The Corporate Director confirmed that there needed to be a timeframe to be agreed by the appropriate portfolio holder and Cabinet to move the work forward
- A discussion was held in respect of issues around school assets and academisation
- The link between the sale of assets and the council's role as a planning authority was considered. The Corporate Director provided an overview of the number of ways that an asset could be disposed of ranging from no consideration of planning issues, some level of planning consideration through a pre-planning process through to a full planning process in respect of an asset
- In response to a concern raised with regard to governance issues in this area, the Corporate Director (Legal and Democratic Services) assured councillors that the

- council had arrangements in place that were legally compliant and which maintained a clear separation between the executive and planning functions
- A point was noted that reference to climate change/energy costs did not cover one off costs of things such as demolition and rebuilding or changes such as how people used accommodation, for example how far people travel to get to work. In response, the Corporate Director of Property and Assets noted that agile working would form part of the work at looking at buildings. Work would be undertaken to understand viability issues around how buildings were maintained
 - A point was made that it was essential to have timescales in place so that progress could be monitored. In response it was noted that there was still work to do in order to have an overall plan and programme for the work
 - Options around disposal of assets needed to be considered to take into account financial issues such as revenue to the council but also wider council objectives such as the provision of affordable housing
 - The council needed to take a holistic approach when considering its estate and what it was able to achieve in terms of both social and economic aims
 - A question was raised in respect of the market for selling property and balancing achieving the best value for the sale of an asset. In response, the Corporate Director noted that the market could determine the value of an asset. The potential of each asset needed to be considered as to whether it should be sold in order to achieve a one off capital receipt or whether it should be repurposed in order to create greater value and ongoing revenue
 - A comment was made about the potential impact of the proposed planning white paper in this area
 - Reference was made to page 8 of the agenda and a comment that the council should be zero carbon by no earlier than 2035 and the point made that the wording should clarify that the council did not have to wait until this date in order to achieve this
 - It was noted that consideration of heritage assets would be subject to consultation and that there would be a sensitive approach to dealing with these assets.

The Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth, Assets and Property thanked the committee for their interesting comments on this subject. He reflected on the position in bringing together a large estate into Dorset Council from the former councils and the work undertaken in order to restructure the officer resources in order to ensure that there was capacity to drive this work forward.

The Chairman summed up the discussion held by the committee which included the key points made in respect of county farms and the revenue generated by these, concerns expressed over the need for clear timescales for this work, issues around academy leases, associated planning issues, provision of affordable housing on sites and disposal of assets and market values. Comments made by the committee would be reported to Cabinet when they considered the report on asset management at their meeting on 3 November 2020.

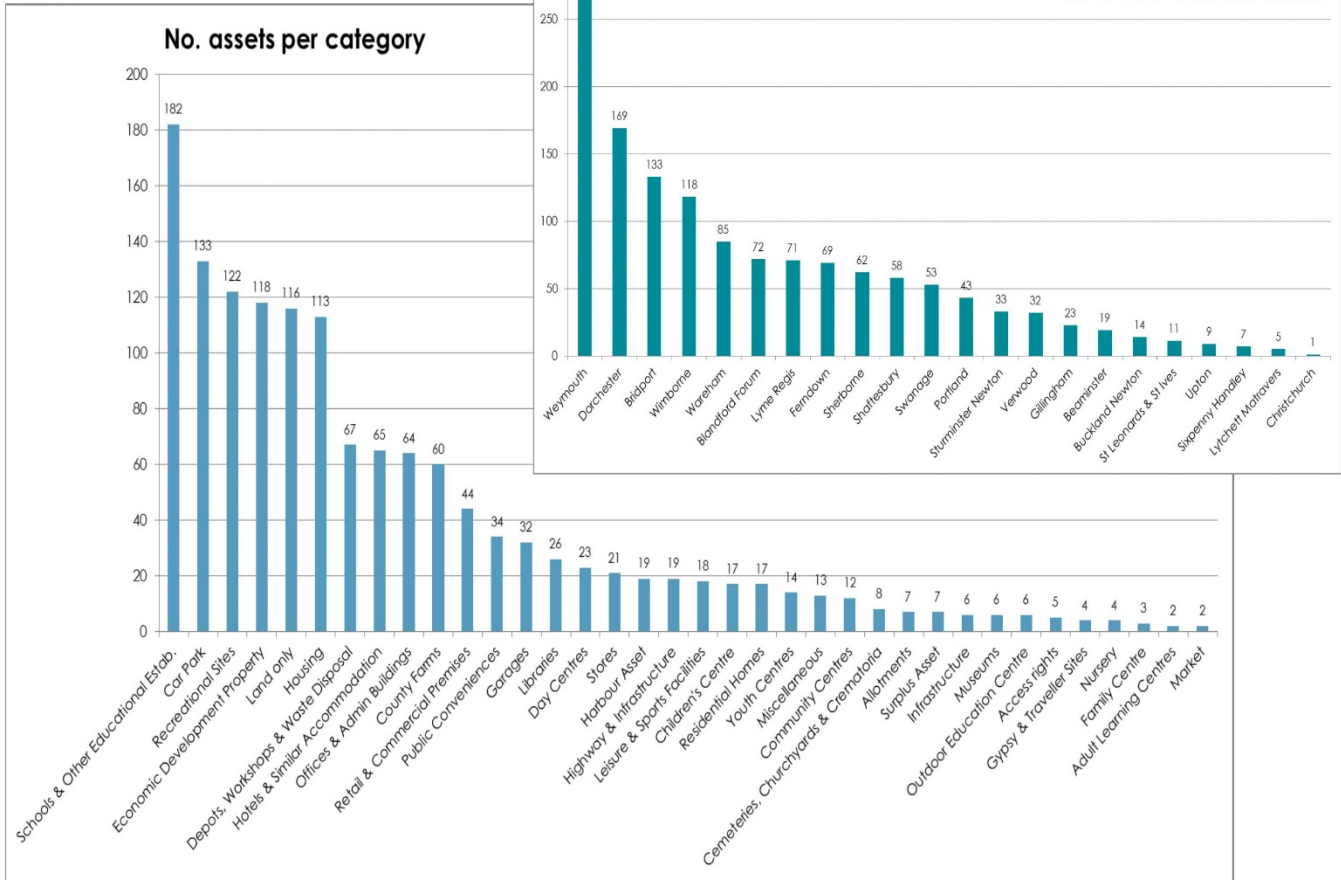
Decision

That the Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee support the approach and methodology to be used as the basis for the review of assets and the basis for determining the future shape and size of the estate.

Appendix 2

Dorset Council Estate

36 asset categories and 22 locations



Appendix 3

Dorset Council

Property Strategy & Asset Management Plan

2020-2024

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| Conclusion & Delivery | 7 |
| Corporate Assessment Flow Chart (Part 1). | Appendix 1 |
| Option Appraisal Flow Chart (Part 2) | Appendix 2 |

Purpose of the Strategy

The Property Strategy and Asset Management Plan sets out the Council's approach to the strategic management of its assets, how it will support delivery, provide the Council with income and how it will be used to promote growth and support regeneration.

The Strategy is intended to define the principles, criteria and process through which decisions will be made regarding the future use of assets.

Context

The Council has a significant and diverse range of interests throughout Dorset.

In 2019 Avison Young were commissioned following Local Government Re-organisation (LGR) to undertake a review of the Estate.

They identified that the Council owns or leases 1,409 property assets (land and buildings) consisting of 36 different classifications of assets distributed across 22 different locations throughout Dorset (see Appendix 1) the majority of which are managed by the Council's Property department. Of these 322 are based in Weymouth, 169 in Dorchester, 133 in Bridport and 118 in Wimborne.

As at 1st April 2020 the total book value of these assets was £463m.

The Council owns a total of 608 sites which have buildings on them and for which it is responsible (excluding schools).

The Council's gross property costs as reported in its 2019/20 accounts are £14.34m per annum and net after allowing for income etc is £m per annum. These figures do not reflect or include those residential property costs incurred by Adult's, Housing or Children's Services for permanent or temporary accommodation as part of commissioned services.

Key Drivers for Change

The Council is aiming to make Dorset a great place to live, work and visit and the Council Plan outlines its five strands in order to support this goal: -

- Staying Safe & Well-working with residents to ensure a good quality of life
- Strong Healthy Communities-working with residents and partners to build and maintain strong communities where people get the best start and lead fulfilling lives
- Suitable Housing-working to deliver affordable, suitable and decent housing
- Economic Growth-working to deliver sustainable economic growth, increasing productivity and the number of high quality jobs in Dorset
- Unique Environment-working to deliver sustainable development while protecting and enhancing Dorset's environment

In addition, the Council have an ambition to design and implement a system of local government that is streamlined, entrepreneurial, agile, innovative, ambitious and sustainable. In order to fulfill these aspirations, the council have embarked on a transformation programme consisting of six key themes of which Property and the Council's Estate is one whereby it wishes to ensure it delivers services in the right place by making best physical and financial use of its estate.

The Council's property portfolio provides a resource base from which to help enable the Council's plans and deliver a range of priorities for the Council and its residents in support its housing, social care and economic development strategies. The Property Strategy and Asset Management Plan sets out the framework and methodology through which the Council will make best use of its assets in order to unlock opportunities for housing (including the provision of more affordable homes), provide opportunities for economic growth and generate income to protect its services and deliver financial and social returns.

Aims & Principles

The Property Strategy will establish a holistic approach to ensure consistency in the management and development of the Council's real estate assets and embed a corporate approach to property rationalisation, consolidation, development and investment in property assets and how it will be managed and will be focused on: -

- Optimising the estate in order to build an efficient, resilient and sustainable portfolio to meet the administrative, operational, educational and social needs of the Council that is fit for purpose
- Conserving, preserving, protecting and effectively utilising those sites of historical interest
- Managing, developing and redeveloping where necessary and viable to do so the commercial estate to maintain and maximise the income provided to support Council services
- Utilising spare land or surplus assets for housing provision and economic regeneration
- Supporting the provision of workspace particularly the Development of the Innovation Park in support of the Council's economic agenda
- Enabling the regeneration of key towns and urban areas
- Providing value for money

The overall outcomes that the council is seeking to achieve are: -

- A significant reduction in the operational estate with associated revenue savings
- Review of surplus operational and commercial assets to determine best possible future use in order to generate additional revenue income streams and capital receipts

The principles are intended to set out the Council's approach to its assets in future and guide future decision making through the process set out later in this document as well as to drive pace in project delivery and asset value realisation.

Principle 1

Embed the Corporate Landlord model to drive the rationalisation and consolidation of the asset estate and corporate asset decision making based on 3-5 year service property requirement strategies

Principle 2

Consolidate operational assets to decrease the number of single use assets, reduce revenue costs and create multi-functional properties, supporting service improvement

Principle 3

Review the asset base to analyse the performance of the assets, ensuring correct mix and type and future needs before determining whether to retain, retain and develop, dispose or acquire

Principle 4

Develop a robust asset management plan to invest properly in all retained assets to ensure they are fit for the future in supporting service delivery and achieve the necessary environmental aspirations

Principle 5

To work collaboratively with Town Councils and other public sector bodies in line with the 'one public estate' principles as well as other Voluntary, Community and faith Sector organisations to identify wider opportunities to benefit the community within the context of asset strategy and planning

Principle 6

Support economic growth working with other associated partners in the provision of workspace at the Innovation Park and other locations throughout Dorset

Applying the Principles

Embedding the Corporate Landlord Model fully within the Council's target operating model will drive different and faster decision making for the future. Based on prepared service property strategies or commercial analysis for properties that fall outside a service or within the Commercial estate for the coming 3-5 years decisions will be made on the viability and feasibility of sites guided by the above principles and using the process and criteria set out below.

It is intended that all assets that are assessed as surplus, not required for operational purposes or are thought not to be performing as anticipated and to be repurposed should be reviewed through this process. This provides confidence that any decision regarding future use of property provides the best and most appropriate output.

It should be noted that best value in terms of capital receipts is not always the right outcome and the Council needs a mix of revenue, capital, social and economic/regenerative returns.

The Decision Making Process

Attached at Appendix 1 is the process of decision making on future asset usage, project delivery and the disposal or otherwise of sites.

The process is in two parts:

Part 1 The Corporate Assessment

This part of the process determines whether an asset has an identified use which enables service delivery in line with corporate and service strategies, for example where there is an identified need within a specified location by multiple services and as such these are co-located within a multi-functional hub therefore enabling asset consolidation and reduction in running costs.

Additionally, this could identify assets which could support alternative service delivery for example extra care sheltered housing that reduces expenditure on high cost care but also delivers important outcomes to residents.

The assessment should consider the cost and condition of the site and would consider, for example, whether a site was low performing (poor occupancy, limited opening hours, high downtime, high voids)/high cost asset in poor condition that is not fit for purpose and whether it requires significant investment etc. In such circumstances the Council may not wish to retain the asset for operational uses and would look to dispose, repurpose or redevelop.

Assets would be retained where there is a clearly defined future strategic purpose (repurpose or redevelop), which has a value and can be delivered within an agreed reasonable timeframe.

The process sets out the stages of this assessment and what happens in each case. If the asset is not suitable or not needed it moves to Part 2.

In Part 1 the following criteria will be used to make these decisions

Corporate Assessment Criteria

In order for an asset to be retained for existing use it must meet one or more of the following criteria: -

An asset requirement has been identified within the service strategy, supports overall service transformation/delivery over the life of the payback period for any future investment and continued use can be justified

The use of the asset reduces: -

- Number of overall assets used
- Revenue cost of asset
- Future investment needs

Or

- Generates additional revenue or capital income

Cost/benefit analysis of investment to make the asset fit for purpose demonstrates an appropriate payback period relevant to the length of future use

Use of the assets will provide fit for purpose, flexible and reconfigurable accommodation that is future proofed and supports multi-purpose building use

The levels of occupancy and the cost of occupying and running the building either equal or compare favourably to relevant benchmark data

It is essential that the building is retained as no other suitable alternative provision is available

The management, maintenance, financing and void costs associated with the building do not exceed the income (particularly with regard to commercial and rented residential accommodation) apart from where significant savings arise when compared with alternative provision such as hotel use.

Part 2-The Option Appraisal

This part of the process focusses on the use of the asset beyond existing use, existing service or operational use requirements. This might include a site that could be disposed of for a capital receipt; redeveloped for revenue income generation or held for future strategic use to maximise output or benefits.

The process outlined in Appendix 2 sets out how this will work but the primary process is a formal options appraisal which considers potential future users of the site. The options appraisal will identify the preferred option and how this best aligns with the Council's needs, aims and ambitions.

Criteria for the Option Appraisal Assessment

Asset is required for future service needs, optimal income generation and/or future development opportunities

Ensuring 'best value' is gained by modelling a net present value (NPV) versus an outright disposal and capital receipt

Scheme deliverability in terms of timescales, risk assessment and prioritisation. Any assessment will take account planning constraints and other issues.

Schemes will be assessed in line with planning guidance and meeting Council prescribed affordability targets to ensure schemes are viable and value of land appropriately reflected

Partnership working and shared development will be assessed and considered where opportunities will deliver quantifiable benefits, mitigate risks or provide significant resources beyond the council's capabilities

Asset supports economic growth and improves the environment and the 'place'

Consideration will be given to the method and cost of funding and as to whether the scheme/project for which the asset is being used can attract any external funding which will then feed into the viability assessment if known.

Place & Economic Growth

The strategy sets out to enhance and utilise the assets the Council owns. With every asset comes an opportunity to revitalise public spaces, enhance community involvement and re-use buildings and land for investment and growth.

In collaboration with partners where appropriate be they public or private sector or, indeed, both the Council will support economic growth and regeneration where viable and beneficial to do so through the re-use and release of its assets. The creation of a joined up approach to asset management coupled with clear criteria for decision making will allow, where appropriate, for the Council in some not all cases to deliver opportunities at a greater pace that meets the needs of Dorset residents.

Scheme Delivery & Approval

The final part of the assessment of any potential project is the method of delivery which may vary from project to project to take account of size, scale, complexity, resource requirements, risks etc.

There are a variety of different delivery models from: -

- disposal and delivery by others,
- direct delivery using Council appointed contractors and third-party professionals where necessary
- working in collaboration with other public sector partners or in some form of joint venture relationship with a private sector partner.

It is not envisaged that the Council will adopt a 'one size fits all' approach and the approach will be dependent on the type and nature of the project and as such the Council will adopt a delivery model that best suits its particular needs either on an individual project basis or based on a combination of projects that can best suit its needs.

Conclusion and Delivery

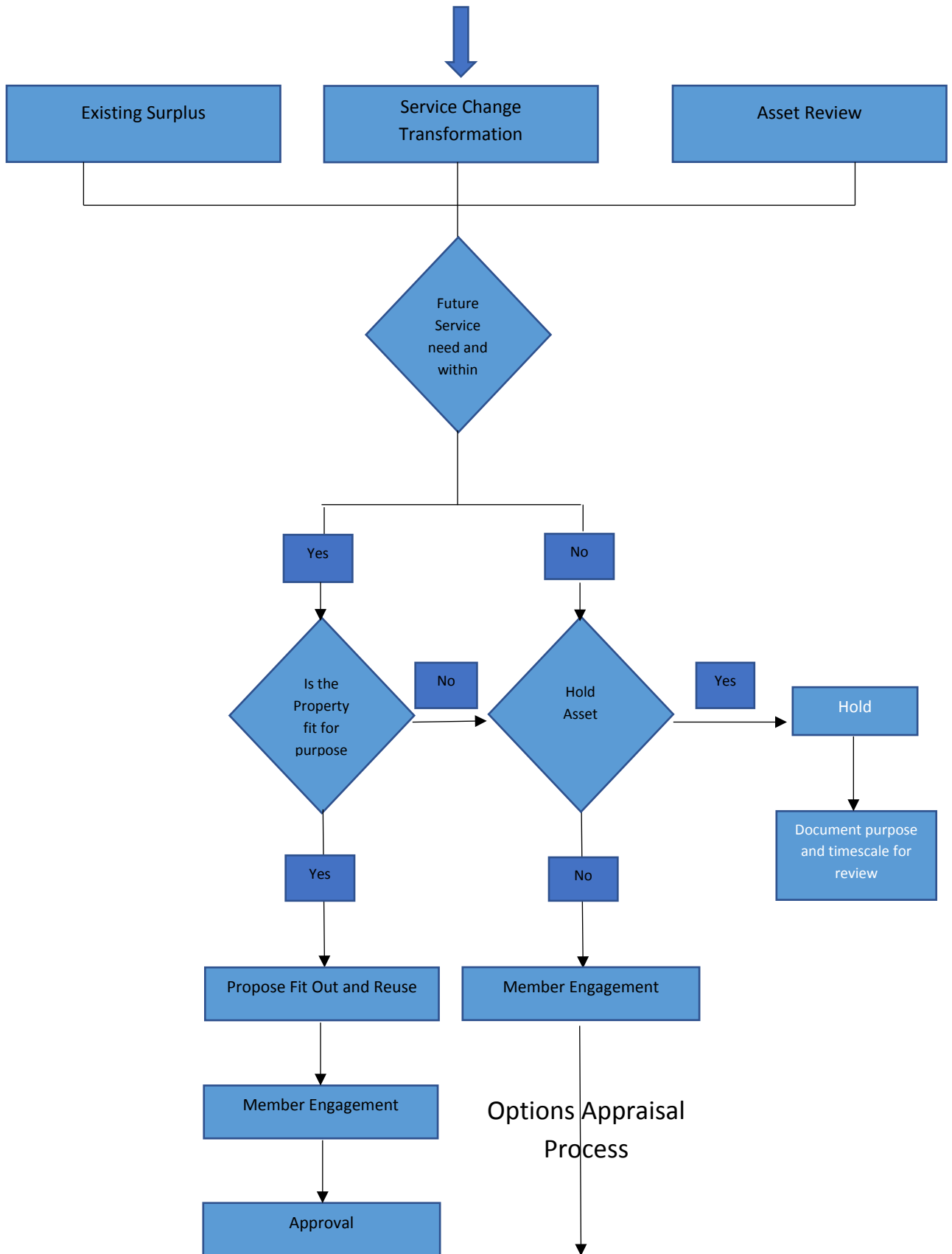
This strategy establishes the principles by which decision making on assets will be made during the period 2020-2024 to deliver the Council's aims and objectives.

It should be read in conjunction with the action Plan which will include the actions required to deliver the principles set out in this document.

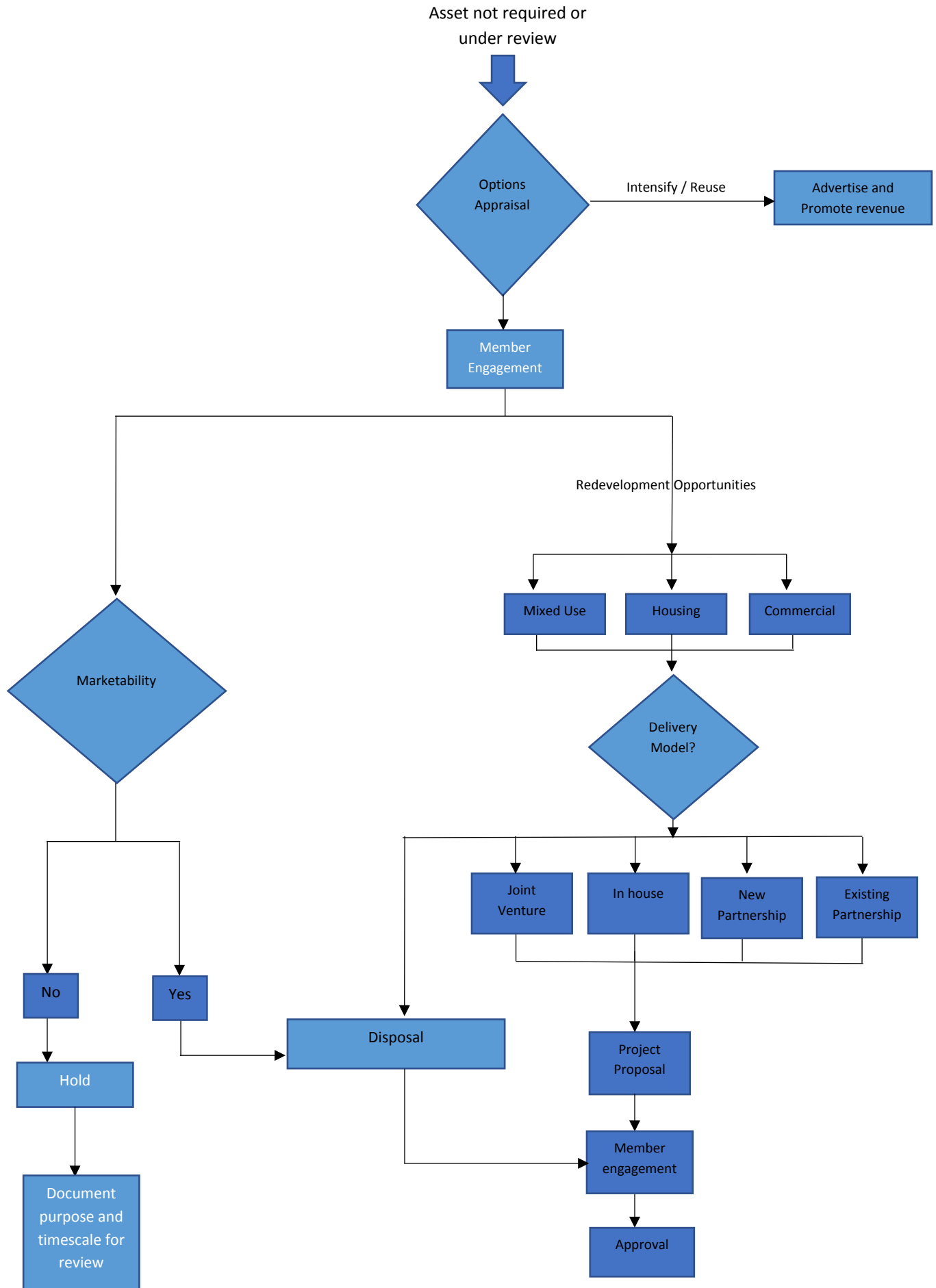
The Property & Assets strategy should be regularly reviewed to ensure it remains fit for purpose in driving forward the Council's property priorities in the future.

Appendix 1

Corporate Assessment Process



Appendix 2 Options Appraisal Process



Appendix 4: Property & Asset Management Strategy-Action Plan

| Action No | Action | Detail | Immediate Deadline | Completion Deadline |
|-----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| 1a | <p>Review of 223 Operational Assets</p> <p>(Assets less commercial assets, schools, car parks, recreational sites, harbours, leisure centres, land, housing, garages, surplus assets, access rights, markets and offices leased to third parties, traveler sites, shared offices on third party sites at no charge)</p> | <p>The Council is seeking to review its operational assets to ensure the right mix and type and where possible consolidate operational assets over the next 3-5 years</p> <p>Targets to be agreed as part of and following service consultations</p> | Sept 2021 | 2024 |
| 1b | | <p>Develop the detailed process for capturing, analysing and planning for future use of surplus property-in order to ensure property is back in use, developed or disposed of as quickly as possible, reducing holding time/ costs</p> | March 2021 | |
| 1c | | <p>Appraise opportunities for re-use, disposal or development and prepare implementation timetable-aligned to consultation-in case asset declared surplus</p> | Sept 2021 | |
| 1d | | <p>Once all operational assets reviewed then repeat every 3 years</p> | | 2024 |

| | | | | |
|---|--------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| 2 | Development of Service Property Strategies | Service property requirement strategies for years 2-5 by Sept 2021 | Sept 2021 | March 2021 |
| 3 | Agile Working | Agile working is implemented to support the reduction in office space 2021/22 to reflect new desk ratios following service consultations. Ref Dorset Workspace actions | Sept 2021 | March 2022 |

| | | | | |
|----|--------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| 4a | Corporate Landlord | Fully implement and embed the Corporate Landlord model within the Council's property function | June 2021 | June 2021 |
| 4b | | Ensure the development of a robust asset management plan of investment | Ongoing | Ongoing |
| 4c | | Specify, procure and implement an upgrade/ replacement for the Technology Forge/BIM system with assessment by Sept 2021 and implementation by March 2022 | Sept 2021 | March 2022 |
| 5a | Governance | Complete a review of governance relating to property, assets | December 2020 | December 2020 |
| 5b | | Complete a review of the decision making process relating to project delivery, including procurement, scheme of delegation and approvals. Amend the constitution if required | December 2020 | Dec 2020-March 2021 |
| 6 | Resourcing | Ensure the projects and delivery plan are fully and appropriately resourced including the implementation of any new management structure required to support the Corporate landlord model. Plan for implementation to be ready end June 2021 | June 2021 | June 2021 |
| 7a | Project Delivery | Current surplus freehold and leasehold assets that have been identified for disposal or termination to be completed between March-June 2021 | March-June 2021 | March-June 2021 |
| 7b | | Initial list of Priority projects to be established no later than June 2021 | June 2021 | June 2021 |
| 7c | | Delivery of the future pipeline of work, including disposals must be resourced to create a future capital and revenue income stream. Develop resource model as part of capital programme development | June 2021 | June 2021 |

| | | | | |
|-----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| 8a | Review of the Commercial Portfolio (355 assets) | An initial review of the commercial asset categories and the assets within them should be undertaken to identify whether they are generating adequate returns, could be repurposed to provide greater value and determine whether they fulfill the Councils economic aims | Sept 2021 | Sept 2021 |
| 8c | | Priorities assets based on high cost/low performance, strategic, potential opportunity value, lease status | April-Sept 2021 | Sept 2021 |
| 8d | | Develop an implementation plan for approval and delivery of resulting priority projects | April-Sept 2021 | Sept 2021 |
| 8e | | Complete analysis of the next tranche of asset analysis as per the process and priorities | Sept 2021-March 2022 | March 2022 |
| 9a | Review of all other 520 Assets (excluding schools/recreational areas include land, garages, housing, allotments, car parks, toilets etc) | All other assets should be reviewed to identify whether they are operating efficiently, effectively, are core Council assets, have alternative or complimentary purposes that add value, have a future requirement | March to Sept 2021 | Sept 2021 |
| 9c | | Priorities assets based on high cost/low performance, redevelopment opportunity etc | April-Sept 2021 | Sept 2021 |
| 9d | | Develop an implementation plan for approval and delivery of resulting priority projects | April-Sept 2021 | Sept 2021 |
| 9e | | Complete analysis of the next tranche of asset analysis as per the process and priorities | Sept 2021-March 2022 | March 2022 |
| 10a | One Public Estate | Re-establish the working group of public sector bodies to review 'one public estate' opportunities | June 2021 | June 2021 |
| 10b | | Develop a list of potential opportunities and co-working opportunities involving the Dorset Property portfolio | June 2021 | June 2021 |
| 10c | | Implement a series of initiatives that deliver efficiencies and improvements from co-location in accordance with the 'one public estate' principles | July 2021-March 2022 | March 2022 |
| 11 | Joint Ventures | Establish a legal and financial model for possible Joint Venture working/arrangements | Sept 2021-March 2022 | Sept 2021-March 2022 |

