

Report on	Development Report
Date of Meeting	13 th June 2024
Reporting Officer	Claire Linney – Assistant Director of Development
Contact Officers	Martina Totten – Social Inclusion Manager

Is this report restricted for confidential business?	Yes	
If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	No	X

1	Purpose of Report
1.1	To consider and agree to act as a Sponsor Body for the Community Asset Transfer and development of a community space at 74 Reahaghey Road, Aughnacloy by Brantry Area Rural Development Association.
1.2	Council officers would seek to use the approach taken for this scheme as a test pilot in the development of a policy position for further CAT Sponsorships.
2	Key Issues
2.1	<p>A request has been submitted to Council to act as a Sponsor Body for Brantry Area Rural Development Association in the acquisition of a property through the D1 Disposal process, under the Community Asset Transfer (CAT) procedure.</p> <p>Council officers met with the officials overseeing the delivery of CAT's in the Department of Communities (DfC) and DTNI, who has been employed to support the Community & Voluntary Sector in the CAT process, to discuss the roles and responsibilities for Council as a Sponsor Body.</p>
2.2	<p>Community Asset Transfer</p> <p>The Department for Social Development (now DfC) developed the policy framework to support CAT in Northern Ireland (Appendix 1) which defines CAT as a change in management and / or ownership of land or buildings, from public bodies to communities.</p> <p>CAT should be recognised as a flexible tool with a broad range of applications, depending on the imagination and ambition of those involved. It represents a means of investing in regeneration and positive social, economic and environmental outcomes.</p> <p>CAT can bring benefits to both parties involved in the transfer and should also bring benefit to the wider community which an asset can be used to serve. Research shows that the benefits include:</p> <p><i>Benefits to the Community</i></p>

- It can improve neighbourhood-based service provision, increasing accessibility for local people, which is particularly important in rural areas;
- It can bring a sense of community identity and pride and the potential for increased community cohesion;
- It can lead to additional jobs, training and business opportunities;
- It can contribute to physical regeneration; and
- It can bring increased confidence, skills and aspirations locally.

Benefits to the public sector

- It can lead to more efficient use of public sector assets – community organisations often make extensive use of volunteers and their local knowledge and hands-on management of the asset can result in lower overheads and better value-for-money, as well as a more intensive use of the asset;
- It can enable community organisations to support public service provision in ways that are more responsive and better related to local need; and
- It can enable effective partnerships between the public sector and the third sector to enhance local services.

Benefits to the Third Sector

- It can lead to increased sustainability for organisations and improved leverage with external agencies - an asset can provide a community organisation with greater financial viability and reduce its dependency on grants;
- It can enable a community organisation to apply for external funding that is not available to a public authority, or even to secure loan finance on the value of the asset; and
- It can facilitate collaboration and resource sharing amongst organisations.

2.3 **Sponsoring Department**

DfC has published a Community Asset Transfer: Guidance for Asset Owners (**Appendix 2**) which provides more detailed guidance for owners in receipt of a Community Asset Transfer interest, including the role of a Sponsoring Body.

In summary; ‘The sponsor body role is to confirm existence of compulsory purchase powers for the intended purpose to allow the transfer to take place, as required under the Stormont Regulation and Government Property Act (NI) 1933. Acting as sponsor body, when not the asset owner, confers no future liability for the asset or the services run from it, nor responsibility for issues such as clawback. There may be instances where it is desirable for the sponsor to play an enhanced role, but this would be subject to agreement between the asset owner and sponsor’.

2.4 **Project Proposal**

The Social Inclusion Manager met with Brantry Area Rural Development Association and DTNI, to discuss their plans for the asset. They wish to acquire a small rural cottage at 74 Rehaghey Road, Aughnacloy to provide them with additional space, which will enable them to extend and enhance their community activities and programmes. A copy of the Disposal of Surplus Public Sector Land or Property Questionnaire they have completed for the D1 process is included in **Appendix 3**.

2.5	<p>MUDC Strategic Priorities</p> <p>A key requirement will be for Council to establish whether or not the proposal makes a significant contribution to strategic or service priorities.</p> <p>Council is currently developing a Community Wealth Building (CWB) Framework for the District. CWB promotes asset-based development and community-owned land and property as significant drivers of regeneration across some of the most socially deprived places in the region. Community owned assets also deliver a range of social and community outcomes including retail facilities, mental health and wellbeing programmes, environmental regeneration, physical activity improvements and family support.</p> <p>The scheme also meets a number of our current Corporate Plan commitments, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working collaboratively across the public, private, community and voluntary sector to achieve shared objectives • Addressing rurality • Promoting Equality of Opportunity and Good Relations
3.1	<p>Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications</p> <p>Financial: None</p> <p>Human: None</p> <p>Risk Management: NA</p>
3.2	<p>Screening & Impact Assessments</p> <p>Equality & Good Relations Implications: N/A</p> <p>Rural Needs Implications: N/A</p>
4	<p>Recommendations</p>
4.1	<p>Members are recommended to agree for Council to be a Sponsor Body to the Community Asset Transfer and development of a community space at 74 Rehaghey Road, Aughnacloy by Brantry Area Rural Development Association</p>
4.2	<p>To use the approach taken for this scheme as a test pilot in the development of a policy position for further CAT Sponsorships.</p>

5	List of Documents Attached
	Appendix 1: CAT Guidance for Asset Owners Appendix 2: CAT Policy Framework Appendix 3: Brantry Area Rural Development Association D1 Questionnaire