

Midlothian Council Asset Transfer Report 2018/19

During 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019 Midlothian Council's Communities Team has been working to make the information on the asset transfer process as simple and accessible as possible. The website has been updated www.midlothian.gov.uk/info/200284/your_community/487/council_properties to include the asset register, a simple expression of interest online form and the Statutory Guidance for Part 5 of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015.

The Community Management Assessment Group, chaired by the Acting Director of Resources and made up of representatives from Legal, Planning, Estates, Education, Finance and the Communities Team, continues to work together to assess asset transfer requests against the 7 best value themes and the contribution to the delivery of Council and national strategic priorities. Officer's recommendations are passed to the Asset Transfer Committee, made up of 1 elected member from each of the 6 wards, to agree or refuse. A separate appeals committee has been agreed, again made up of 1 elected from each ward (who was not on the asset transfer committee).

Throughout the year we have developed our application form to include information on Fields in Trust agreements and the requirement for a detailed map of the area to be considered. We have tightened up our due diligence procedures, ensured a consistent scoring process has been followed and worked with colleagues in Housing to identify areas allocated on the Strategic Housing Improvement Plan and the impact of this on potential asset transfer requests.

Table 1: Status of asset transfers

Number of expressions of interest received	12
Number of formal asset transfer requests received	4
How many requests were agreed to	1
At assessment stage	3
How many requests were refused	n/a

Two of the formal asset transfer requests are for green spaces protected under a Fields in Trust (Fit) arrangement. We now have a much clearer understanding of the process of dealing with FiT sites, when to engage with FiT and the legal costs associated with this part of the process.

The majority of expressions of interest have been for sports facilities; pavilions and pitches, which is in line with Midlothian Council's financial strategy to consider asset transfer for halls and pavilions and the approved pitch strategy.

The asset transfer that has been agreed in this period is for a lease of a piece of land adjacent to a community building that has been developed as a community garden. Granting the lease will allow the organisation to apply for funding and continue to develop the space for the wider community.

Two of the other formal requests are from local childcare providers in relation to former sports facilities and aim to develop early year's provision and community spaces. The final application is from a community football club in respect of full ownership of a pavilion, grass and astro pitches.

Table 2: Summary of formal asset transfer requests validated

Validation date	Community Transfer Body	Asset	Requested	Status
27/6/18	Loanhead After School Club Childcare Services Ltd	Community Garden @ The Link, Loanhead	Lease	Agreed
25/7/18	Bonnyrigg Rose Community Football Club	Poltonhall Pavilion, car park, grass pitches and astro	Ownership	Agreed (30/4/19)
6/12/18	Bonnyrigg After School Club	Polton Bowling Pavilion and Green	Ownership	Assessed, to be considered at CAT committee
14/12/18	Loanhead After School Club Childcare Services Ltd	Rosewell Pavilion and adjacent land (under Fields in Trust arrangement)	Lease	Assessed, to be considered at CAT committee

A package of bespoke support is provided to community groups who wish to pursue an asset transfer.