**HALC**

**19/6/25**

**Asset Transfer**

I think you are all aware that HDC is creating an asset transfer policy and a list of assets that will sit alongside the policy. The objective is to create a method for local assets to continue to be owned and managed at a local level, where there is a desire to do that.

What I want to do this evening is explain about where we are at, where we are going, and how I envisage this working. I’ll also be clear with you that this will be a bit of a work in progress situation, and there will be a need for us to work our way together on the delivery of this, in places where there is a desire to investigate the feasibility of asset transfer.

I think Jane may have sent you all the asset lists in your parish. I know this may surprise you, but this is not a list that we had three months ago, so we have had to pull together officers from our Property, Parks, Parking and Corporate teams. There are over 300 assets on that list, from car parks, to nature reserves, to community halls to random little bits of grass.

Its not a list we had, as we never needed it. Different teams knew what they looked after, where sites were and what they had to do to manage them.

We also found out that those 300 assets probably had about 500 names for them. So parks would know something under one name, property as another, and the land registry as a third. So there has been a real job to bring them all together, on a single list. And that list is nearly right. But I guarantee that it is not totally right. So, if you see something that you think is wrong – let us know and we will look into it.

There is a good chance that it is wrong, but also an equal chance that it is right and just odd. So for instance, last week West Grinstead PC got in touch to say that we had a bit of land in Partridge Green, but on the Land Registry entry we had called it Steyning. Obviously wrong, yes? No! Because it was part of a group of sites under one deed, and it had all been recorded under a Steyning site. So, as I say, complicated.

Alongside that, we have been developing an Asset Transfer Policy. We took a draft to one of our Performance and Scrutiny Committees a few weeks ago, and following that, I have redrafted it and am talking to councillors to get a final version approved.

In very simple terms, that policy says that if a new parish is created, or there are changes to parish operations through a community governance review – the policy doesn’t apply. In those circumstances, HDC, with the agreement of the new or revised parish council can agree which functions will be transferred to that council.

The policy then sets out, how other parish councils can apply for assets to be transferred. Now, as it is a Council policy, it isn’t just a couple of notes on the back of a fag packet. Within it though – there are seven key points a parish would need to demonstrate. Sue asked for any notes to be circulated – but I finished this about an hour ago – so I’ll send on to her tomorrow – so you don’t need to scribble too assiduously:

* A business case demonstrating community benefit (social, economic, environmental) and sustainability;
* Evidence of community support and engagement;
* Details for the proposed use of the Asset and how it will be retained for community use and benefit;
* A management plan for the Asset;
* Evidence of good governance and financial sustainability;
* Details of its governance structure and constitution (or equivalent document);
* Any other information as is deemed appropriate by the Council having regard to the nature of the Asset and the identity of the applicant.

What I would do, is encourage you to talk to us if you are considering an application. There will be various elements of discussion. One being the condition of the asset. The policy says that it will be in reasonable condition. And that will be in the view of HDC. So we won’t be making everything perfect. If investment is needed, then that might be reasonable – but a car park may be less than perfect. A football pitch could flood all the time. Some investment may be reasonable, but not all.

Also – the PC will need to undertake the land registry searches, to know precisely what the site is, HDC doesn’t have the capacity to do these for everyone. There is a cost – but its not particularly heavy.

For all of us, this is a step into the unknown. So don’t expect perfection from us. I don’t expect it from you either. But if there are sites that you think you could take on, give it some consideration and we can have a conversation.

I think my final point would be that there is probably not a major rush. We all know we are doing this because of LGR, but in all honesty, when the new authority is created, it will have more to worry about than 99% of the sites on our list. Cornwall Council was created in 2008, and they are still transferring assets to parishes. They have been actively working on it for some years and continue to do so. My expectation is that HDC policies such as this will get transferred to the new authority and they will continue to operate as we are planning, for some time. And it will probably work for them. HDC took on the operation of Kithurst car park in Amberley a couple of years ago. It was too small and too much of a hassle for West Sussex to be worried about, and our councillors agreed to take it on. My suspicion is that this will be the case for the new authority for many of these HDC assets.

I know that this is will lead to many questions – some now and plenty in the future. Happy to take any now, or just get in touch as we move forward.