

CAT – Responses form Community Groups

Nikki Strickland – Newfoundpool Community Centre:

-What led you to consider taking on Community Asset Transfer and what did you hope to achieve?

A need for a home for Leicester theatre group and a suggestion from the mayor that an asset transfer may be suitable for us to consider.

-What does your group deliver?

A home for Leicester theatre group

A multi use building with 5 rooms and 2 kitchens which are available to hire

The current hirers are - a day time nursery, dance schools, fitness classes and a theatre group. All groups are available to local people to benefit from.

Historically we have also been able to support as a polling station and a place for church groups.

-What have been the main the benefits of the CAT for local people since the building was transferred?

A nursery is now available, along with the other groups listed above

-How did you find the Community Asset Transfer application process?

Straight forward and supported by the council where there were questions

-What advice would you have for other organisations considering Community Asset Transfer?

Come along and see what we do at Newfoundpool to see what's been achieved

Read the fine detail of the paperwork and know the condition of your building before you take it on. Some costs can be high and may not be supported in your contract.

-What were the biggest challenges you faced during the CAT process and what could make it easier?

Consider use of the centralised contracts the council has to help with statutory aspects of running the buildings

Help with sourcing funding

Consider a best practice sharing group for all CAT lease holders

-Has the cost of maintaining and running the building aligned with your original business plan, or have there been any financial surprises?

Storm damage and aging infrastructure have increased our costs over what we expected

-Do you have any comments on your current lease?

No

-How have you found the Council's annual monitoring and support?

Useful to keep us in check with our legal requirements. Supportive where help has been asked for.

-What does success look like for your centre five years from now?

Continue to grow the centre, and potentially add in more facilities for children - eg improved outdoor space for them to use.

-What specific skills (e.g., bid writing, facilities management, accounting) do you think are most essential for a committee to have before they sign a lease?

All of the the above!

Marketing - understanding what is needed in the area and what will sell / make money

-On a scale of 1 to 10, how clear and straightforward did you find the CAT application paperwork and requirements?

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Susan Hind – Oak Centre

-What led you to consider taking on Community Asset Transfer and what did you hope to achieve?

We had been running a children's group in Braunstone at the Bright Centre and had used rented space there to start a location of our church as well. We wanted to have a space to meet as a church, but primarily we wanted to make an impact onto the local community. The centre was not very active when we arrived and we saw the potential for it to be thriving and to make a positive difference in North Braunstone.

-What does your group deliver?

We run the centre as a community centre and always aim to hire out space only to groups that will benefit local people. We also operate as a local hub for our compassion charity Open Hands, giving out food hampers and referring people as needed

www.openhandsleicester.org.uk

We opened a preschool on the premises Hand in Hand Preschool , which enjoys an excellent reputation, serves local families and has just expanded into more space within the centre.

As a church we run a weekly children's group The Hub for primary aged children, and Impact for young people- both of these groups involve a family atmosphere and a meal, as they cater for children who may not experience this each day.

We also run a weekly parent and toddler group 'Little Ones' - a stay and play with interactive stories and songs. This is very popular.

We see many people visit the centre each week to participate in dance, first aid, games, health appointments, clinics, consultations, meetings, creative classes and much more. We also rent space for some parties and events, with strict agreements in place. The centre is thriving and a happy place to come to.

-What have been the main the benefits of the CAT for local people since the building was transferred?

When we first arrived, not many people came to the centre. Now it is thriving and people love the events that are put on, like family fun events, free half term holiday club etc as well as classes and activities.

-How did you find the Community Asset Transfer application process?

I managed the lady who did the application back then, as far as I remember it was quite straightforward.

-What advice would you have for other organisations considering Community Asset Transfer?

Go for it, but be clear about what you will be responsible for and have a clear plan of action and clear management in place.

-What were the biggest challenges you faced during the CAT process and what could make it easier?

I am sorry but I don't remember this too well. Having a great centre manager from the off was a game changer to us. They set up great systems and processes and went above and beyond to make the process work.

-Has the cost of maintaining and running the building aligned with your original business plan, or have there been any financial surprises?

Mostly it has aligned.

-Do you have any comments on your current lease?

No

-How have you found the Council's annual monitoring and support?

We get monitoring visits occasionally and those who come are always very impressed with the organisation and our policies and records etc. I wouldn't say we get a lot of support as such.

-What does success look like for your centre five years from now?

Even more visits to the centre, even more real impact in the community, improvements to the building (eg floor and roof).

-What specific skills (e.g., bid writing, facilities management, accounting) do you think are most essential for a committee to have before they sign a lease?

Facilities management, strategic thinking, having effective and competent oversight (in our case, One Church trustees and Open Hands trustees).

-On a scale of 1 to 10, how clear and straightforward did you find the CAT application paperwork and requirements?

I can't easily answer this question-

I would be making it up as I can't remember but I think it was quite clear.

David Hind – Manor House

-What led you to consider taking on Community Asset Transfer and what did you hope to achieve?

We are a church based in the local community, we were using the centre already for a number of community events and projects, including running a mum and toddler group, a foodbank, and a winter wonderland event, as well as renting a room for our church office,

As a church we want to be a presence in the local community and serve it the best we can. Seeking to serve the community in creating a local community hub where people receive support,

-What does your group deliver?

We continue to deliver a local foodbank which serve roughly 200 families over a two week period. From this we offer debt advise via CAP and benefits and energy advise,

We hold two big local community event a year, a summer bbq which is free to the local community and a winter wonderland event which is arts and craft for children

We also run our church youth group here every Friday night.

Then we have a number of local groups using our centre which include care for old age people a nursery for young children, then a mix of education group. Other community group like art groups, boxing and tai chi.

-What have been the main the benefits of the CAT for local people since the building was transferred?

We can hold a number of community event here at the centre, engage with the community more, also having more space to run the foodbank and store the food that is required.

Local people know if they need help can come up to the Centre.

-How did you find the Community Asset Transfer application process?

My former collage was more involved in the application process, but no longer works here, I was say from my little involvement, that it was lengthy and required us at time to be front footed in finding out information

-What advice would you have for other organisations considering Community Asset Transfer?

Make sure all survey are carried out and up to date before taking over a CAT building, work with the current user of any building, we have a number of users still here that where here when we took over.

-What were the biggest challenges you faced during the CAT process and what could make it easier?

Not sure I can comment as was not hugely involved, but I think a clear time frame for the process would have been helpful, from applying to the takeover date

-Has the cost of maintaining and running the building aligned with your original business plan, or have there been any financial surprises?

The maintaining cost has aligned with our plan, however i am quite practical and we rely on a number of volunteers to help maintain the centre, this has kept the cost down

We have recently had to change someone the pipe work which was lead that as an unexpected cost

-Do you have any comments on your current lease?

There is a cottage on site which only the site manager is allowed to live in, this is a clause in the lease, the site manger no-longer lives on site, so we have a cottage we can only use for storage currently, and we are paying council tax on this,

Ideally, we have the lease change to allow the cottage to be use for more than just site manager accommodation, either another employee or someone in the community that need help with housing short term,

We likely having to look at changing the use of the cottage, as don't want to pay council tax on a property we cannot use.

-How have you found the Council's annual monitoring and support?

We had very little contact from the council since taking over the building, we had a couple of site visit over the course of our 10 years here.

-What does success look like for your centre five years from now?

More community groups using the centre, more opportunities for foodbank client to receive different advice and help, hopefully run some course based on English or parenting or handling money well.

To be know as a place where people can receive life, hope and healing.

-What specific skills (e.g., bid writing, facilities management, accounting) do you think are most essential for a committee to have before they sign a lease?

Bid writing, a good understanding of what the future running cost of the building might be and any future works that may be needed to be carried out.

-On a scale of 1 to 10, how clear and straightforward did you find the CAT application paperwork and requirements?

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