Leicester City Council

Scrutiny Review

THE COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER STRATEGY

A review of the Neighbourhood Services and Community Involvement Scrutiny Commission

6th September 2018

Leicester
City Council

Background to scrutiny reviews

Determining the right topics for scrutiny reviews is the first step in making sure scrutiny provides benefits to the Council and the community.

This scoping template will assist in planning the review by defining the purpose, methodology and resources needed. It should be completed by the Member proposing the review, in liaison with the lead Director and the Scrutiny Manager. Scrutiny Officers can provide support and assistance with this.

In order to be effective, every scrutiny review must be properly project managed to ensure it achieves its aims and delivers measurable outcomes. To achieve this, it is essential that the scope of the review is well defined at the outset. This way the review is less likely to get side-tracked or become overambitious in what it hopes to tackle. The Commission's objectives should, therefore, be as SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic & Time-bound) as possible.

The scoping document is also a good tool for communicating what the review is about, who is involved and how it will be undertaken to all partners and interested stakeholders.

The form also includes a section on public and media interest in the review which should be completed in conjunction with the Council's Communications Team. This will allow the Commission to be properly prepared for any media interest and to plan the release of any press statements.

Scrutiny reviews will be supported by a Scrutiny Officer.

Evaluation

Reviewing changes that have been made as a result of a scrutiny review is the most common way of assessing the effectiveness. Any scrutiny review should consider whether an on-going monitoring role for the Commission is appropriate in relation to the topic under review.

For further information please contact the Scrutiny Team on 0116 4546340

To be completed by the Member proposing the review	
1. **Title of the proposed scrutiny review**	**The Community Asset Transfer (CAT) strategy**
2. **Proposed by**	Cllr Inderjit Gugnani, Chair Neighbourhood Services and Community Involvement Scrutiny Commission
3. **Rationale** Why do you want to undertake this review?	The council has sought to transfer ownership and or/ management of appropriate buildings to the control of community groups. The strategy has been driven in part by a need to rationalise its property stock across the city and to reorganise neighbourhood services to best serve local communities; but the intention is also to empower local groups and organisations and add social value to the communities in which they operate. It is important for the commission to seek assurances that this process has worked well and the review seeks to evaluate how well the objectives of the strategy have been achieved.

4.   **Purpose and aims of the review**
What question(s) do you want to answer and what do you want to achieve? (Outcomes?)
	This review seeks to:
	
	• Determine the extent to which the council has succeeded in the objectives to:
	  ➢ Use its buildings better
	  ➢ Empower local groups to add social value to the communities they operate in
	• Assess lessons learned from the CAT strategy, by both the city council and by groups who have taken on community assets as part of the strategy.
	• Ascertain the social value created and how it is embedded in the CAT strategy
	• Determine what might be the future direction of the strategy
	• Make recommendations

5. **Links with corporate aims / priorities** How does the review link to corporate aims and priorities? http://citymayor.leicester.gov.uk/delivery-plan-2013-14/	The strategy is part of the Transforming Neighbourhood Services (TNS) programme which has become embedded in the Using Buildings Better (UBB) strategy. The strategy also links into the support for the city's *neighbourhoods and communities.*

6.	**Scope** Set out what is included in the scope of the review and what is not. For example which services it does and does not cover.	Community use of the transferred assets will be assessed, including access by groups who did not take over management of community assets. The review will: • evaluate the financial and social implications of the CAT transfers • measure and evaluate the community uses of the transferred assets • assess the effectiveness of the successor organisations
7.	**Methodology** Describe the methods you will use to undertake the review. How will you undertake the review, what evidence will need to be gathered from members, officers and key stakeholders, including partners and external organisations and experts?	The review will examine the consultation methodology and criteria used by the council to: • identify suitable buildings to transfer out of council ownership • Identify suitable community groups with which to negotiate a CAT. Community groups will be interviewed to discuss how well the transfer has worked. Community use of the transferred assets will be assessed, including access by groups who did not take over management of community assets. Councillors will be asked to about their views on how well the strategy is working in their area and more generally. The review will involve site visits to as many transferred assets as feasible and taking evidence from residents at local level. Where a CAT has failed to go to completion the Commission will seek to fully understand the underlying reasons. Where possible contracts, business plans and accounts will be made available to members. Relevant executive reports will be appended as part of the evidence to the Commission. Pro forma questionnaires will be devised and distributed to potential witnesses, organisations and members.
	Witnesses Set out who you want to gather evidence from and how you will plan to do this	• Departmental staff will be asked to give evidence • Executive lead and where requested ward councillors • Staff at transferred assets • Volunteers and users of the community buildings • Members of the wider community • Voluntary Action Leicester (VAL)

8.	**Timescales** How long is the review expected to take to complete?	Four months
	Proposed start date	September 2018
	Proposed completion date	December 2018
9.	**Resources / staffing requirements** Scrutiny reviews are facilitated by Scrutiny Officers and it is important to estimate the amount of their time, in weeks, that will be required in order to manage the review Project Plan effectively.	The review can be conducted within the resources of the scrutiny team. It is estimated a total of three weeks of collective time over the proposed period will be required to support the review and prepare the report.
	Do you anticipate any further resources will be required e.g. site visits or independent technical advice? If so, please provide details.	Visits to community assets may be conducted by members of the Commission. No outside technical advice is envisaged to be needed.
10.	**Review recommendations and findings** To whom will the recommendations be addressed? E.g. Executive / External Partner?	Main recommendations will be directed to the Executive. However, some recommendations may be of assistance to local groups who are running or considering running community assets.
11.	**Likely publicity arising from the review -** Is this topic likely to be of high interest to the media? Please explain.	It is not expected that this review will generate high media interest but the council's communications team will be kept aware of any issues that may arise of public interest.
12.	**Publicising the review and its findings and recommendations** How will these be published / advertised?	There will be a review report that will be published as part of the commission's papers on the council's website.
13.	**How will this review add value to policy development or service improvement?**	The review hopes to achieve the following: • Service improvement: ensuring that neighbourhood services work in the best interest of residents. • Policy development: learning lessons on how we help community organisations and residents understand and best engage with changes to neighbourhood services.

		To be completed by the Executive Lead	
14.	**Executive Lead's Comments** The Executive Lead is responsible for the portfolio so it is important to seek and understand their views and ensure they are engaged in the process so that Scrutiny's recommendations can be taken on board where appropriate.	
	To be completed by the Divisional Lead Director	
15.	**Divisional Comments** Scrutiny's role is to influence others to take action and it is important that Scrutiny Commissions seek and understand the views of the Divisional Director.	Close work has been undertaken on Community Asset Transfer by officers leading on the Transforming Neighbourhood Services project and officers from the Council's Estates and Building Services team. It is recommended that the officers who have been involved are approached early on to share background and overview information with regard to CAT, and to provide access to lead community organisations who have taken on CAT buildings, and the groups who operate in them. John Leach Director of Neighbourhood and Environmental Services
16.	**Are there any potential risks to undertaking this scrutiny review?** E.g. are there any similar reviews being undertaken, on-going work or changes in policy which would supersede the need for this review?	None known
17.	**Are you able to assist with the proposed review? If not please explain why.** In terms of agreement / supporting documentation / resource availability?	
	Name	
	Role	
	Date	

		To be completed by the Scrutiny Support Manager	
18.	**Will the proposed scrutiny review / timescales negatively impact on other work within the Scrutiny Team?** (Conflicts with other work commitments)	The review will be supported by the Scrutiny Policy Officer and is not expected to negatively impact on his work.	
	Do you have available staffing resources to facilitate this scrutiny review? If not, please provide details.	The review can be adequately supported by the Scrutiny Team.	
	Name	Kalvaran Sandhu, Scrutiny Support Manager	
	Date	21st August 2018	