

## **Written submission from Midlothian Council**

On behalf of Midlothian Council I would respond as follows to the questions raised

### **1. Does your authority have arrangements in place to hold some or all local authority assets in a separate land holding?**

Response: No the authority does not currently hold any assets in a separate landholding interest.

### **2. When disposing of, or transferring assets how are those assets valued. To what degree is this purely a financial valuation?**

Response: Assets are valued at market value for their existing use, or if appropriate alternative use. Actual transfer value may be agreed at less than this – subject to Ministerial approval. The value of the transfer is taken into account in terms of the support the Council is providing to a voluntary group and is linked to the basis that the proposed community use for the building will deliver/provide continuity/provision of services in support of the Community Plan objectives.

### **3. What is the attitude of the authority to the disposal of assets? Does your authority have a policy to encourage the disposal of assets to community groups?**

Response: Midlothian are prepared to consider disposal of surplus assets where they are not included in any existing planned capital programme. Assets which are vacant, are not subject to a wider programme would be available for transfer.

Council officers are reviewing a previously presented but not approved Community Asset Transfer Policy proposal; the draft policy encourages non-profit distributing local voluntary groups to seek to transfer of appropriate Council assets.

The policy is linked to other Council approved policies on co production and community engagement and is aimed at providing positive support to genuine community voluntary groups to deliver a longer term sustainable community service and effective asset transfer. In this regard the draft policy seeks to ensure that organisations seeking asset transfer have a robust and financially sound and sustainable business case, and that the membership of the organisation have the appropriate skills and experience to run both the services to be provided and the maintain and manage the asset being transferred.

### **What is your experience of disposal and what difficulties has the authority encountered?**

Midlothian have transferred site to community organisations and have also transferred developer contribution funds to further support organisations develop new facilities on those sites. In addition considerable officer time has been spent on supporting organisations develop.

On occasions the Council has come into difficulties in dealing with Communities, particularly where there are 2 or 3 different 'community groups' seeking to bid for the same asset. This gives rise to conflict within the community, difficulties for the

Council in dealing with individual bodies. These issues are difficult to manage and it is hoped that the Community Asset Transfer Policy currently being drafted will assist in this process. However the evaluation of bids, which can be a combination of financial and non-financial issues, is difficult to quantify to enable effective fair and open comparison between groups.