

Written submission from Stirling Council

Thank you for your letter dated 18th November, please find below answers to your questions:

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

Stirling Council does have a number of arms-length companies which hold non-operational properties.

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

Values are determined on the basis of market value, in accordance with RICS Valuation Standards but the Council does have a procedure for disposals to communities – at less than the market value. This requires the approval of the whole Council.

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?

Stirling Council enthusiastically supports the transfer of assets to communities provided that there is a sound business case showing how both the community and the asset will substantially benefit from the transfer. The work that the Council is currently doing on settlement planning, and on community halls encourages communities to take responsibility for facilities in their localities.

4. What is your experience of disposal and what difficulties has the authority encountered?

Communities can find it challenging satisfying the Council that they have a viable and sustainable business case for taking on assets. Smaller communities can find it difficult to find willing volunteers with relevant business experience within their community; or even to put together a grant application form and to produce a business plan.

Even once they have completed the business plan – they can find it difficult to raise funds to run the facility, and to fund repairs and investment – the Big Lottery tends to be the only source of these funds.

Because of this, Stirling Council has agreed temporary leases (for a couple of years) with groups in order to allow them to establish whether their project is viable.

Community councils would be best placed to take on assets transferred, but they are not constituted to hold heritable property, therefore other bodies have to be used to hold these assets.

Stirling Council's experience has been that the whole process of transferring assets to Communities is very demanding of officer time, and our stretched resources have meant that we have only been able to support a limited number of transfer to date.