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Decision Report - Executive Decision

Forward Plan Reference: FP/22/11/13

Decision Date – 13/02/23

Proposed Asset Management Strategy for Somerset Council

Executive Member(s): Cllr Ros Wyke - Lead Member for Development and Assets

Local Member(s) and Division: All

Lead Officer: Oliver Woodhams, Head of Corporate Property

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1. Summary / Background

- 1.1** A proposed Asset Management Strategy and Plan for Somerset Council forms Appendix A to this report. It sets out the Council's strategic objectives for property asset management, the approach the Council will take to managing its property assets, and a series of high-level commitments to guide property asset management decisions and policy making.
- 1.2** The scope of the proposed Asset Management Strategy and Plan is focussed on 'real estate' (land and buildings) assets. Infrastructure assets, such as highways, street furniture, coastal and harbour infrastructure, cycle paths, rights of way and flood defences are not in the scope of this document; similarly, vehicles, IT infrastructure, plant and equipment and other asset groups will be governed by separate strategies. The Property Asset Management Strategy and Plan also excludes assets acquired and held for investment yield, and assets held within the Housing Revenue Account – these asset groups are subject to separate policies and plans.
- 1.3** Following discussion at Executive, this document will be brought to the Full Council on the 22nd February 2023 for adoption.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1.** The Executive is asked to:
 - i) Consider and comment on the proposed strategy and plan; and
 - ii) Endorse the plan and recommend its approval by Council at its meeting on 22 February 2023.

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3. Reasons for recommendations

- 3.1** The proposed strategy will provide the strategic direction for the management of land and property assets for Somerset Council. A strategy for asset management provides a framework to guide the management of the property estate, so that it can serve the Council and the people of Somerset as effectively as possible.

4. Other options considered

- 4.1.** The proposed Asset Management Strategy has been developed based on the draft Somerset Council Plan and following an analysis of the land and property estate that the new Council will inherit. The strategy has been developed through the LGR Asset Optimisation workstream, in conjunction with the Lead Executive Members for Development and Assets and Finance.
- 4.2.** The option of not creating an Asset Management Strategy was disregarded as guidance from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy and the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors recommends that property is managed strategically. This requires that a strategy be set and overseen.

5. Links to County Vision, Business Plan and Medium-Term Financial Strategy

- 5.1.** The strategies and plan have been developed from the Council Plan Priorities and Vision and are designed to directly support them. Further detail can be found in the Asset Management Strategic Objectives (page 7) in Appendix 1, which details how each of the property strategies contributes to the priorities and vision.

6. Consultations and co-production

- 6.1.** This Asset Management Strategy and Plan has been produced and reviewed by Lead Members and officers from across the five Somerset Councils as part of the Property Assets Optimisation Workstream.
- 6.2.** The Strategy and Plan has also been discussed at the Local Government Reorganisation Asset Strategy Group, which is attended by members and senior officers including representation from Corporate Finance, as well as at a meeting between SLT and Executive on the 12th December 2022, and at the LGR Programme Board on the 22nd December 2022. In addition, it was discussed at the Local Government Reorganisation Joint Scrutiny Committee on the 19th January 2023 and at the Local Government Reorganisation Implementation Board on the 31st January 2023. Feedback from these discussions has been considered and, where appropriate, incorporated into the proposed plan.
- 6.3.** The authors have also undertaken a stakeholder engagement exercise, and this proposed plan incorporates feedback from internal stakeholders and public sector partners.

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7. Financial and Risk Implications

- 7.1. There are no direct financial implications to this Strategy. The strategies contained, however, will be subject to budget and funding opportunities.
- 7.2. There are no specific risks associated with this strategy. All decisions taken with regards to property are subject to the Council's scheme of delegation and constitution and will be assessed individually for their risks.

8. Legal and HR Implications

- 8.1. There are no legal and HR implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report, as this plan provides strategic direction only. However there may be future decisions in the delivery of this plan that themselves have legal or HR implications, and the relevant expert officer advice will be considered as required.

9. Other Implications

9.1. Equalities Implications

This strategy includes a strategic objective to provide assets that are fit for purpose, safe & compliant and as part of that a commitment to consider the location of buildings to support accessibility for people who do not have access to a car, proactively assess the accessibility of buildings and, where reasonable, make adjustments to ensure that buildings are accessible and support customers and staff with protected characteristics.

The strategy and plan will be taken forward through a wide range of actions, programmes and policies. Due regard for the particular needs of people with protected characteristics will be assessed as appropriate as these actions, programmes, and policies are developed; with appropriate mitigations and regard for equalities implications embedded into the policy framework and decision making.

9.2. Community Safety Implications

There are no Community Safety Implications directly associated with this Strategy and Plan.

9.3. Sustainability Implications

While the Asset Management Strategy does not specifically detail actions (as it provides strategic direction only), it does commit to using Council assets to address the Climate Emergency. This includes eliminating or reducing the use of fossil fuel heating systems, supporting active travel, encouraging

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sustainable agricultural practices, and reducing the consumption of embedded carbon in new build and refurbishment projects.

9.4. Health and Safety Implications

This strategy does not itself have any health and safety implications, but it does restate the commitment of the department to providing fit for purpose, safe, and compliant assets, which will help to ensure people are safe when using Council assets.

9.5. Health and Wellbeing Implications

This strategy includes a strategic objective to meet housing and care needs, with an emphasis on social housing, and as part of that a commitment to work with social care commissioners to use the council's asset base to improve the sufficiency of care placements in the county.

9.6. Social Value

Each of the strategies contained within this document has potential social value benefits involved, although the precise nature and financial impact of these has not yet been determined.

For example, strategy statement 4: *The Council's estate is used to meet housing and care needs, with an emphasis on social housing* has clear social value implications as it discusses the use of Council assets to create positive value for local communities. Investment in the council's land and buildings estate will support social value through the councils procurement policies.

10. Scrutiny comments / recommendations:

- 10.1** This Strategy and Plan was discussed at the Local Government Reorganisation Joint Scrutiny Committee on the 19th January 2022. The committee asked the authors to reconsider the social value implications of the proposed strategy, and this feedback has been incorporated into this report.

11. Background

- 11.1.** The proposed Asset Management Strategy and Plan for Somerset Council, which forms Appendix A to this report, sets out the Council's strategic objectives for property asset management, the approach the Council will take to managing its property assets, and a series of high-level commitments to guide property asset management decisions and policy making.
- 11.2.** This Asset Management Strategies and Policies have been produced by Lead Members and officers from across the five Somerset Councils as part of the Property Assets Optimisation Workstream and have now been

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drafted into a full document with background and contextual information. The Executive is asked to review and comment on the proposed strategy and plan.

- 11.3.** Subject to discussion at Executive, this document will be recommended for adoption at the Full Council on the 22nd February 2023.

12. Appendices

Appendix A – Proposed Corporate Property Asset Management Strategy

Report Sign-Off

		Signed-off
Legal Implications	Honor Clarke	26/01/23
Governance	Scott Wooldridge	27/01/23
Corporate Finance	Jason Vaughan	26/01/23
Human Resources	Chris Squire	26/01/23
Property	Paula Hewitt / Oliver Woodhams	31/01/23
Procurement	Claire Griffiths	26/01/23
Senior Manager	Paula Hewitt – Lead Director, Economic and Community Infrastructure	31/01/23
Commissioning Development	Sunita Mills / Ryszard Rusinek	26/01/23
Local Member	All	n/a
Lead Member	Cllr Ros Wyke, Lead Member for Development & Assets	26/01/23
Opposition Spokesperson	Cllr Bob Filmer – Opposition Spokesperson for Development and Assets	19/01/23
Scrutiny Chair	Cllr Bob Filmer – Opposition Spokesperson for Development and Assets	19/01/23