

Asset Management Planning in Carmarthenshire County Council

A Response to a Call for Evidence from the Welsh Assembly Government's Finance Committee

Following the 2009 Wales Audit office review of Buildings Management, Carmarthenshire County Council compiled a comprehensive Action Plan which was subsequently incorporated in the Authority's Corporate Asset Management Plan. The Action Plan (and asset management generally) formed one of the Strategic Themes in the Outcome Agreement between the Welsh Assembly Government and the County Council for the period 2010-2013. The Council recognised the need to improve and created a new Asset Review team to ensure that the improvement process was sufficiently resourced.

The WAO Buildings Management Review was helpful in providing a corporate focus on asset management and identifying resourcing deficiencies which had prevented the asset management service from fully implementing strategies and reviews.

Highlighted below are some of the key milestones in Carmarthenshire County Council's asset management planning process and areas of ongoing work:

- **Corporate Asset Management Plan** - The Council's first Asset Management Plan was prepared in 2004 but a fully updated and expanded document was adopted in March 2010 and the Council has committed to updating this annually with a full revision every 3 years. Work is currently ongoing into the revised plan due to be completed by March 2013.

The Plan aims to:

- set out the corporate objectives & linkages with property, including HR and ICT;
- examine service drivers for change and the property implications arising from such changes;
- review existing service portfolios and performance;
- provide high level options for meeting challenges;

- **Service Asset Management Plans (SAMPs)** - In 2005 a series of SAMPs were compiled by Service Departments co-ordinated by the Corporate Property Division to identify their service requirements and impact on property held. SAMPs are currently being revised by the Authority's various services. Plans

will highlight service objectives, suitability & sufficiency of current service portfolio & issues resulting. Outcomes will feed into Corporate Asset Management Plan.

- **Asset Review Team** – A small team was created in 2010 to implement the outcomes and action plan arising from the Buildings Management Review. One of the key objectives was to undertake a comprehensive review of all assets and produce a step change in strategic asset management planning processes across the Authority. Local Area Reviews undertaken during 2010 and 2011 and involved capturing information on all of the Council's property assets together with those of its public sector partners and looking at opportunities to make better use of property by:-
 - highlighting the potential opportunities to share accommodation;
 - identifying "immediately" surplus assets that can be easily developable and sold;
 - highlighting "potentially" surplus assets which would require preparatory work at varying degrees of complexity to enable disposal;
 - the opportunity to transfer assets to Town, Community Councils and the third sector;
 - dealing with service related property issues on a strategic basis
- **Office Accommodation Strategy 2011-14** - A comprehensively revised strategy was produced in 2011 (updating and expanding on the first strategy in 2005). This provides:
 - clear guidance and strategy on the rationalisation programme for administrative premises;
 - space utilisation standards and performance data across the portfolio.
- **Outcomes of Local Area Reviews :-**
 - Disposals – Circa £50m estimated current & potentially surplus. Work is ongoing to meet disposal targets to assist with funding the Council's Schools and Housing improvement programmes and general capital receipts to fund the wider capital programme.
 - Collaborative working – examples include sharing accommodation with Dyfed Powys Police, creation of integrated regional teams with Hywel Dda Local Health Board and undertaking advisory work for Mid & West Wales Fire Authority, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority and Swansea City Council.
 - Asset Transfers – Variety of transfers to Town and Community Councils and third sector groups covering parks, playgrounds, day centres and public conveniences, bringing about local ownership of assets.

- **National Assets Working Group (NAWG)** – Carmarthenshire's Local Asset Reviews became one of nine best practice projects selected by NAWG in 2011. A second project was also selected - a "Total Place" solution at Llandovery where the Council plans to co-ordinate a single public sector hub in the town, in conjunction with its public sector partners and other agencies.
- **e-PIMS** – Carmarthenshire County Council became the first Council in Wales to include all its ownership data on the e-PIMS mapping system. Full boundary information has subsequently been added and The Council is currently facilitating the transfer of property data from all the Town and Community Councils in the County who wish to utilise the system's benefits.
- **Collaboration** – The County Council continues to convene regular meetings with public sector partners in the area to continue the dialogue over future strategic plans and opportunities. A forum has been established with all estates professionals and the Council's Executive Board has been hosting meetings with Town and Community Councils on the potential to manage assets at a more local level

Responses to Specific Questions from the Committee

Is asset management linked to wider strategic and policy objectives, both in the Welsh Government, and across the wider public sector?

Carmarthenshire County Council considers that asset management is fully linked to strategic and policy objectives. The Corporate Asset Management Plan is adopted by Council and the wider Local Asset Review process has engaged all Council services as well as a range of public and 3rd sector partners.

In 2010 the Wales Audit Office made the following recommendations, from your experience, to what extent has progress been made in relation to these?

- The Assembly Government should enable more effective land and buildings management across Wales by consulting with public bodies to ascertain what further guidance, information, support and incentives may be required to encourage an improved and more co-ordinated approach to the management of land and buildings.

The establishment of the National Assets Working Group, with representation from all parts of the public sector has been instrumental in delivering a more collaborative approach to land and buildings management in Wales.

- Ensure land and buildings strategies are up to date and link clearly with corporate and service objectives.
- Involve all stakeholders in the development of land and buildings strategies with ownership of the strategies at the highest level.
- Develop service land and buildings plans which link to the corporate land and buildings strategy.
- Integrate land and buildings management with service planning, workforce planning and ICT strategies, doing more to improve utilisation through flexible working and land and buildings rationalisation.
- Ensure roles and responsibilities for managing land and buildings are clearly defined, understood and communicated.

It is considered that these items are a matter for each organisation to deliver at a local level, taking account of each organisation's individual needs and context.

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