



Draft Community Asset Acquisition and Management Policy

Policy Statement

Witney Town Council recognises that community assets play an important role in supporting the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of the town. The Council will consider opportunities to acquire, manage or facilitate the management of community assets where doing so delivers long-term public benefit, represents value for money and supports the Council's Strategic Plan.

1. Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to establish the principles that will guide Witney Town Council when considering opportunities to acquire, own, lease, manage or facilitate the management of community assets.

The Policy recognises that opportunities may arise through:

- Local Government Reorganisation;
- Asset transfers from principal authorities;
- Developer contributions;
- Community initiatives;
- Charitable organisations;
- Public bodies; or
- Other opportunities that support the Council's Strategic Plan.

This Policy provides the overarching principles to support transparent, robust and proportionate decision making.

2. Policy Objectives

The Council aims to:

- safeguard community assets for public benefit;
- support thriving and resilient communities;
- secure value for money;
- ensure long-term financial sustainability;
- encourage community involvement;
- consider innovative governance arrangements;
- manage risk effectively;
- protect public funds.

3. Scope

This Policy applies whenever the Council is invited to consider:

- accepting ownership;
- accepting a lease;
- accepting management responsibility;
- acquiring land or buildings;
- establishing a new community facility;
- taking on additional public services linked to an asset.

The Council will ensure that any proposed acquisition is supported by an appropriate statutory power and complies with all relevant legislation.

Nothing within this Policy places the Council under any obligation to accept the transfer, ownership or management of any community asset. Each opportunity will be considered on its own merits, having regard to the Council's statutory powers, financial position, strategic priorities, available resources and the long-term interests of the community.

For the purposes of this Policy, a *community asset* may include (but is not limited to):

- parks and open spaces;
- sports facilities;
- community centres;
- civic buildings;
- public conveniences;
- car parks;
- allotments;
- heritage assets;
- play areas;
- recreational facilities;
- commercial premises held for community benefit;
- other land or buildings that contribute to the wellbeing of the community.

4. Guiding Principles

Throughout every stage the Council should have regard to:

- Community benefit
- Value for money
- Long-term financial sustainability
- Strategic fit
- Transparency
- Appropriate community engagement
- Proportionate decision making
- Legal compliance
- Environmental sustainability and climate resilience

- Risk management
- Equality, diversity, accessibility and inclusion

5. Decision Making

The Council has adopted a **Decision Framework for the Consideration of Community Asset Transfers & New Asset Opportunities**, attached at **Appendix A**, which will normally be followed when considering significant community asset acquisitions. Where it is considered appropriate to depart from the Framework, the reasons will be clearly documented within the report to Members.

6. Community Engagement

The Council recognises that meaningful engagement is fundamental to successful community asset ownership.

The scale of engagement will be proportionate to:

- the value of the asset;
- the significance to the community;
- the potential financial implications;
- the number of stakeholders affected.

Engagement may include:

- public consultation;
- stakeholder workshops;
- surveys;
- user group meetings;
- statutory consultation where required.

7. Governance & Delivery Models

This framework is intended to provide guidance rather than prescribe a fixed process. Every opportunity to acquire or manage a community asset will present different circumstances, opportunities, risks and timescales. The Council will apply this framework proportionately, taking account of the nature and complexity of each proposal, and may adapt the sequence or extent of individual stages where appropriate.

In determining whether to acquire and how best to manage a community asset, the Council will seek to identify the governance and delivery model that best secures long-term community benefit, financial sustainability and effective stewardship of public assets. Direct management by the Council will not automatically be presumed to be the preferred option. Alternative delivery models, including management by existing

community organisations, charitable trusts, community interest companies, sports clubs, partnership arrangements or other appropriate bodies, will be considered where they better achieve these objectives and align with the Council's Strategic Plan.

Governance Model	Typical Circumstances
Direct Council Management	Civic buildings, parks, open spaces
Lease to Community Organisation	Sports clubs, community centres
Community Trust	Multi-use community facilities
Community Interest Company	Commercial/community mixed use
Charitable Incorporated Organisation	Charitable facilities
Partnership Agreement	Joint public services
Service Level Agreement	Specialist operational services
Charitable Trust administered by the Town Council	Heritage, civic or endowed charitable assets

8. Financial Considerations

Cover:

- Whole life costs including ongoing maintenance
- Capital investment
- Revenue implications
- Reserves
- External funding
- Income generation
- Borrowing
- Staffing
- Asset management plans
- Exit strategy where appropriate

9. Risk Management

Requires consideration of:

- Legal risk

- Financial risk
- Reputational risk
- Operational risk
- Environmental risk
- Community expectations
- Future liabilities
- Health & Safety risk

10. Monitoring

The implementation of this Policy will be monitored through individual project reviews and, where appropriate, periodic reports to Members. Lessons learned from completed projects will be used to inform future asset acquisition decisions.

11. Review

This policy will be reviewed every four years or following significant legislative or organisational change.

Version	1.0
Adopted by	Full Council
Date adopted	xx xxxx 2026
Review date	xx xxxx 2030
Policy Owner	Town Clerk & CEO
Responsible Committee	Policy, Governance & Finance Committee