

# WEALDEN DISTRICT COUNCIL

## ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN – 2007

### 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**1.1** Wealden District Council has a small portfolio of property assets and has consistent and regular review arrangements.

**1.2** The Council has no assets held for investment purposes and only a few assets held for strategic purposes.

**1.3** The Corporate Property Officer (CPO) is the Council's Head of Corporate Assets, reporting directly to the Cabinet. An Asset Management Group of Officers (AMG) meets formally to manage property issues corporately and comprises Heads of Service and Principal Officers representing all the Council's Directorates.

**1.4** The Council has an Estate Terrier holding Core, Intermediate and subsidiary data on all the Council's assets and incorporating a unique property reference number.

**1.5** The Council has calculated property Performance Indicators 1 to 5 inclusive and has in place local performance indicators.

**1.6** The Council has a generally well-maintained property portfolio and the maintenance backlog of the General Fund assets is therefore low.

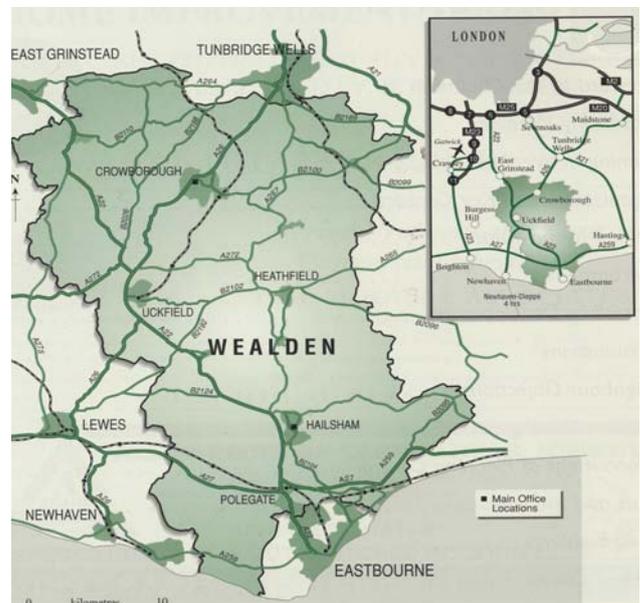
**1.7** The AMG has reviewed a considerable number of asset options using the Council's internally developed Options Appraisal Toolkit (which has been distributed to partner authorities).

**1.8** The Council has a current strategy of reviewing its property holdings and disposing of redundant properties and adequately maintaining its ongoing portfolio. Acquisitions are few in number and only implemented after careful consideration.

**1.9** Review of the property portfolio is ongoing and the AMG has the remit to recommend improvements to the management of the Council's property assets.

### 2. INTRODUCTION

**2.1.** Wealden District Council administers a large rural area extending over 83,635 Hectares of the county of East Sussex. Stretching from the outskirts of Tunbridge Wells and East Grinstead in the north to Eastbourne and the English Channel in the south. The District includes two areas of outstanding natural beauty, the High Weald & South Downs. The population exceeds 140,000 of which about half live in the small towns of Crowborough, Uckfield, Heathfield, Hailsham



and Polegate. The Council has a small property asset portfolio which has been, and continues to be, the subject of regular review.

**2.2** The Council achieved Beacon Council status for Sustainable Waste and retained Investor in People award in 2000. The Council has generally a well-maintained stock of property and funds have been identified to target those properties requiring additional resources. The Council made a Corporate Commitment to Energy Efficiency in 1993 and has been proactive in its energy management and environmental commitments for many years.

**2.3** The Council's Asset Management Plan (AMP) is intended to incorporate into a single document, the objectives, consultation processes, target setting, funding, monitoring and reporting of the Council's land and property portfolio. Where other key documents already exist, the AMP does not seek to duplicate information, but cross-refers to those documents as necessary. Of particular relevance in this regard are the Property Terrier, which sets out the detailed schedule of property holdings, and the Housing Service Business Plan. It should be noted that this AMP only considers the land and property portfolio, not vehicles, IT or other equipment as these are dealt with elsewhere.

**2.4** The AMP draws together and supplements the raft of existing asset management arrangements in a form intended to meet the requirements for all local authorities to develop and maintain the Corporate Asset Management Process. The Plan follows the guidance for smaller authorities where property assets are relatively few in number.

**2.5** Excluding the Council's Housing portfolio, the Council owns (or has an interest in) 6 Leisure properties - with a value of £5.97m and gross internal floor area (GIA) of 10,660 m<sup>2</sup> and 124 General Rate Fund and other properties – with a value of £18.34m and a GIA of 12963m<sup>2</sup>. This compact portfolio of properties is the result of regular and strict review over many years where surplus properties have been disposed of and newly arising requirements have been met by appropriate investment in either its own portfolio or well-considered new acquisitions. It should also be noted that the Council's Leisure Department has been outsourced and the leisure properties have been leased/sub-leased to Freedom Leisure Limited, formerly Wealden Leisure Limited. In addition, the Council owns Argos Hill Windmill which remains the subject of attention by the Directors, Officers, Members and other stakeholders in an attempt to secure its long term future

### **3. CORPORATE ISSUES**

**3.1. Mission, Corporate Objectives and Priorities** - the AMP has been developed to support the Council's Mission Statement and Corporate Objectives as set out in the 2005/08 Corporate Plan (CP). Our Mission is **“to work together to improve the quality of life in Wealden”**. The Corporate Objectives are:

1. Protect and enhance a sustainable environment;
2. Promote a healthier and safer community;
3. Develop a more prosperous and sustainable local economy.

4. To strive for excellence.

### **Our Priorities**

The Council's strategic approach to improvement focuses on issues it considers are of the highest priority for its Corporate Objectives. These comprise of eleven priorities that are fundamental to improvement planning and delivery identified by the Council's Cabinet:

#### **Priorities for protecting and enhancing a sustainable environment**

- [Improving performance in planning](#)
- [Preservation of the environment through planning processes](#)
- [Litter picking, street cleansing and CROWN](#)

#### **Priorities for promoting healthier and safer communities**

- [Affordable housing through the Local Plan](#)
- [Striving for healthier and safer communities](#)

#### **Priority for developing a more prosperous and sustainable economy**

- [Economic revitalisation through the Local Strategic Partnership](#)

#### **Priorities for striving for excellence**

- [Improving performance in Housing and Council Tax Benefit](#)
- [Improving customer access to services](#)
- [Delivering our medium term financial strategy](#)
- [Streamlining the Council](#)
- [Improving the range and effectiveness of partnership working](#)

In addition to these strategic priorities, the Council has a wide range of service specific priorities which are set out in our [service plans](#).

**3.2. Corporate Links-** the AMP is not only informed by the Corporate Objectives of the Council but coheres with other key strategies

These links will be more fully detailed within this document upon the completion of the revision of the Council's Corporate and Service Plans which should reflect the new Organisational structure and responsibilities

## **4. ORGANISATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR CORPORATE ASSET MANAGEMENT**

**4.1** The Council has a Leader and Executive model of political management. The Lead Member for property issues is the portfolio holder responsible for Assets and Finance.

**4.1.1** The Council deploys relevant professionals across its property base to optimise cohesion across service delivery. For example, a property surveying team is located in the Hailsham office to ensure cohesion with relevant Housing and Environmental Health Services. A property surveying team is also located in the Crowborough office to ensure cohesion with Estates Management, Engineering Services and Planning Services.

**4.2** Corporate Property Officer (CPO) is the Head of Corporate Assets and is a member of the Directorate Management Team. The CPO reports to the Corporate Management Team and the Cabinet as necessary.

**4.2.1** It is the responsibility of the CPO to:

- a) ensure proper stakeholder consultation and review takes place regarding assets and that findings are fed into the decision making process;
- b) develop the AMP for consideration and approval by the Council;
- c) ensure adherence to Corporate Objectives;
- d) respond to the findings of BVRs and other performance management and audit information as well as the requirements stemming from service plans and the like;
- e) ensure the management of assets coheres with the Council's budgetary planning;
- f) implement the AMP including meeting agreed objectives and adhering to agreed programmes;
- g) ensure new proposals regarding use of the Council's land, which proposals may be outside of the agreed programme of work, are addressed in an integrated way which serves the broad interests of the Council;
- h) liaise with the Director of Corporate Services and Change Control on the preparation of a Capital Strategy that fully coheres with the Corporate Objectives and the AMP.
- i) ensure all asset management issues are properly considered by the Council's Corporate Management Team.

**4.3.** The CPO reports as necessary but not less than twice yearly to the Cabinet.

In addition, the CPO meets with the relevant Lead Members of the Cabinet to consider specific opportunities and challenges for sites. In this regard, the CPO has met with the Lead Member for Assets and the Lead Member for Services, on a number of occasions. Those Members have given directions on certain sites such as the Council's Jarvis Brook landholdings.

**4.4.** The CPO is supported by a senior management forum known as The Asset Management Group (AMG). The AMG is responsible to the CPO for assisting that Officer in achieving the objective set out in the Corporate Plan. Its Terms of Reference are:

*"To ensure a corporate approach to the management of the Council's assets in pursuing the programmes of work set out in the Asset Management Plan and Performance Plan. The Group will be guided by the Council's objectives and will set targets for property including fitness for purpose, opportunity for shared use and will assess performance targets as well as audit and inspection and stakeholder feedback. Targets will be regularly reviewed and reflected in revisions to the Asset Management Plan. The Group will meet not less than quarterly and will implement the annual programme; in particular, the application of the Options Appraisal Toolkit to identified sites in order to optimise the estate and its use. The Group will work to formal agendas and will produce formal minutes."*

The Group comprises Heads of Service, other corporate officers, a senior finance officer and service representatives from each department. Service representatives generally have a dual role such as that of the Planning Department representative (the Head of Planning and Environmental Policy) who has personal expertise in land use and forward planning. Full membership (with Department) is as follows:

Director of Corporate Services  
Head of Corporate Assets(CPO)  
Head of Financial Services (Corporate Services)

Head of Planning and Environmental Policy (Environmental Services)  
Head of Housing( Community Services)

Head of Licensing and Pollution Control (Community Services)  
Operations Manager ( Environmental Services)  
Estates Management Officer (Corporate Services)

Formal meetings of the Group have been occurring on a monthly basis to continue the Council's 5 year rolling programme of asset appraisals and on a quarterly basis to review direction and report on performance. These meetings together with the Options Appraisal Toolkit, which is the vehicle by which sites are appraised, have been successful to date in achieving the objectives set by the CPO for the AMG however they are now subject of a formal review by the CPO to ensure that the procedures and appraising documentation remain suitable for this application in the light of current thinking in this area.

## **5. CONSULTATION**

**5.1 Housing Capital Projects-** the Housing Strategy and the HRA Business Plan set out the present and future requirements for Housing property and arrangements for the corporate planning and consultation elements of Housing Capital schemes and reference should be made to those documents. Each March next year's planned maintenance programme is presented to stakeholders and Members for approval. Stakeholder consultation is a particularly strong activity and has culminated in the release of certain undeveloped sites for affordable housing or other suitable purpose and this is the subject of ongoing review and consultation.

**5.2 Capital Project Management Teams-** the Council has an established procedure for capital projects whereby a team is formed to ensure proper input of client, property and corporate interests into the viability, development and management of capital projects. The CPO will ensure such schemes are in accordance with corporate objectives. Schemes are required to be reported to Committee in draft form for early consideration before detailed design can take place. The performance of schemes, once completed, is reported to Members on a quarterly basis.

**5.3 Long-term asset management-** the Council has adopted a strategy for developing and maintaining its major public buildings to acceptable standards and to meet its

objectives. Each January, Members receive a rolling programme of maintenance and improvements typically for a ten year period for those works which are considered necessary to keep offices in a condition where they will continue to contribute towards corporate objectives. This strategy for property aims and objectives is updated regularly, not least by use of the Options Appraisal Toolkit.

**5.4 Accommodation Group-** the Council has in place an Accommodation Group of officers that meets regularly to consider accommodation issues within the two Council offices. All departments are represented on the Group. Through this vehicle, pressures and opportunities for change are identified and solutions proposed. With the proposed change to a single site Headquarters, Consultants will be assisting Directors, Officers and Members in formulating an appropriate strategy to facilitate this change and ensuring that the various stakeholders interests are properly considered.

**5.5 Consultation Arrangements-** in addition to the arrangements mentioned above, a number of effective consultation measures are embodied in the Council's asset management regime. In respect of Leisure Centres (outsourced to Freedom Leisure Limited), the former 'client' department regularly consulted users on their needs and aspirations in terms of facilities. Views were fed back into development plans. Consultation has taken place in relation to Disabled Adaptations and has assisted the realistic prioritisation of improvement schemes. Housing capital schemes such as major developments of sheltered schemes or planned maintenance on an estate is routinely and regularly the subject of consultation with tenants, through tenant focus groups. Standards for void maintenance and day to day repairs have been developed and refined following a series of tenant focus group consultation exercises. Tenants have also been consulted on the transition from a high to low cost maintenance regime in respect of external components such as doors and fascias. For day to day maintenance, all tenants seeking repairs are provided with a tenant satisfaction slip as part of the works notification. Whilst this facility traditionally has a low response rate in absolute terms nevertheless it shows a very high level of satisfaction (%) with the service provided. The East Sussex Group of Property Officers (ESGPO) has become a valuable format to enable consultation with neighbour and partner authorities and opportunities are being explored to expand this concept across other borders of the District. Public surveys are also conducted in respect of car parks and public conveniences. Through the Best Value Review process, all other aspects of asset provision and management will be subject to consultation to a prescribed programme. Other opportunities for meaningful consultation with any stakeholder groups not currently feeding views into decision-making processes will be sought.

**5.5.1 Employee Consultative Groups** - the Council's own employees sit on two key consultation groups. These groups have considered schemes and made recommendations in relation to office location, capacity and layout. Consideration has also been given to depot management and maintenance programmes including security and environmental matters.. These groups meet on a quarterly basis with Members and views have been fed through to Committee.

**5.6 Community support via the Council's assets** - it is estimated that some 92% of the Council's General Fund estate (measured as a percentage of the number of buildings as opposed to the estate value) directly supports community strategies. Examples of such assets include Leisure Centres, beaches and the Cuckoo Trail, (community health and well being, recreation) the Council's car parks and Leap Cross Enterprise Centre (regeneration and economic development). In addition, there are a number of properties

leased or licensed for community purposes such as village halls, recreation fields and allotments. The whole of the housing stock directly supports a range of community objectives.

**5.7 Influencing the service provision** – this comprehensive consultation programme implemented by the Council (and described above) has influenced and changed the service provision of the property assets. Examples are given above but further examples are the provision of the Pevensey Bay toilets and Information Centre, the current proposal to lease Argos Hill Windmill to a Trust, the outsourcing of the leisure facilities, and the review of the of the Housing service provision.

**5.8 Feedback** – Information gained and actions taken following consultation is regularly reported back to the consultees through various formats, eg Parish Conference, staff newsletter, meetings and information exchange with ESGPO.

## **6. DATA MANAGEMENT**

**6.1.** It is an inherent part of this Council's Asset Management Plan that the Council undertakes a full and regular survey of the Authority's current and future data requirements and challenges the current systems' capability to hold the necessary information (as a minimum to hold all property core data), to perform to the requirements of the AMP, including the demonstration of performance through national and local PI's. The CPO is responsible for ensuring the adequacy of all such systems and the accuracy and completeness of all data stored therein, established through validation procedures. Details of current systems and how they are used to further the aims of the AMP, are set out below.

**6.1.1.** The Council regularly assesses its requirements for property related data and regularly reviews arrangements for managing such data. The council has decided that it needs to store and interrogate data that will support the effective management of property, including need, fitness for purpose, condition, efficiency of use and flexibility. Information systems are in place to achieve this objective and are supported by a range of related information systems.

**6.2.** Key property data sources held by the Council are as follows:

- Estate Terrier para 6.3 below
- Property condition survey system (Keystone) para 6.4
- Contaminated Land Register para 6.5
- Listed Building Register para 6.6
- Asbestos Register para 6.7
- Repairs history files (Uniclass/Orchard) para 6.7
- Graphical Information System (GIS) para 6.7
- Financial Information System. Para 6.7
- Departmental address lists, now being overlaid with the NLPG corporate address list. Para 6.8

**6.2.1** The CPO ensures integration between relevant systems and with the Council's financial information systems through various means. For example, the Orchard Management System includes a repair module for housing and General Fund properties

and links to the Financial Information System. The NLPG system is being developed in a way that will allow property and financial data to be integrated through the UPRN.

**6.3. Estate Terrier**-The existing land terrier system has been in place since 1998 and was upgraded to include the GRF assets in 1999. The system is a stand alone “Greenly” software package which is linked to the Council’s GIS mapping base to provide a visual aspect to staff of the Council’s land holding.

Whilst this software has proved satisfactory in the past, currently Officers are appraising alternative software systems which will meet the current and anticipated future requirements of the service which can no longer be met with the present Greenly system. It is anticipated that a decision of the replacement Terrier system will be made within the next three to four months.

**6.4 Property Condition** - Certain requirements of asset management planning and the information required for performance indicators, challenge the capacity of the Land Terrier system and the CPO has therefore required the “Keystone” property condition information system to be used to complement the data stored in respect of General Fund properties. The capacity of the two information systems is kept under review in order to ensure the Council’s ongoing ability to comply with all aspects of effective property data management. Condition surveys are regularly implemented on the council’s properties and the information stored for management, reporting and budget setting purposes.

**6.5 Contaminated Land Register** – contains information on the Council’s own land and other land which will impact on the financial viability of using the land for other than its current use. This database is held within the Environmental Health Department.

**6.6 Listed Building Register** – contains information on buildings listed for their historic and architectural value to the heritage of the country. This database is held by the Planning Department.

**6.7 Other Data Systems** – The Asbestos Register, Repairs History files, Graphical Information System all hold information relevant to asset management and assist the AMG to understand the context of the asset and any limitations to its future use. Other systems are being explored on a regular basis and the capabilities of systems to hold sufficient information is reviewed on not less than on a biennial basis. The Council’s Financial Information System holds all data related to budgets and expenditure identified on the basis of a group of properties and where appropriate on an individual property basis.

**6.8 Property Reference Numbers** - All records are recorded in the various systems by means of Unique Property Reference Number (UPRN). The Council has joined the consortium to progress the National Land and Property Gazetteer (NLPG). The Council historically had a number of discrete property address databases, which it is currently streamlining into a single, definitive UPRN database. All historic address databases are the subject of discussions with the relevant software supplier(s) to achieve the required level of support to the integration process. Whilst the existing UPRN’s will ultimately be superseded by a new nationally agreed UPRN, nevertheless the existing UPRN will remain for identification purposes as a secondary reference.

**6.8.1 Training Needs** - A data management skill/needs register has been developed through the Council’s Training and Development procedures and through the staff annual performance appraisal process. This latter process identifies any training requirements as

agreed between employees and their line managers and linked to corporate and individual objectives. Extensive training has been undertaken in the specific systems including Keystone and NLPG.

**6.9. Statistical Information on Condition and Backlog** – The Council has maintained a robust property management regime for many years. It has directly employed a team of well-qualified professionals (augmented, as required, by specialist advisors) to ensure effective and efficient property management. It has also made adequate resources available to achieve an overall high level of condition throughout the property portfolio and thus achieved minimal backlog levels.

**6.10. Satisfying e.gov Requirements** – The Council has a robust and pioneering attitude towards e.government, and it is possible to disseminate the Terrier database to other internal departments electronically. The AMG will debate and recommend to Members the wider issue of what, if any, of this sensitive information they would wish to be seen by the General Public on the Council's Official Web site.

## **7. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT, MONITORING AND INFORMATION**

The performance management, monitoring and information procedures are currently being reviewed to reflect the changes arising from the Organisational restructure.

## **8. PROGRAMME AND PLAN DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION**

**8.1** The Council holds many programmes for maintaining its property stock to meet its current and proposed needs. The various service strategy documents and the Housing Revenue Business Plan primarily identify these. The AMG uses these documents to match the Council's properties and land holdings to its current and future need. This enables timely disposal of surplus property and the possibility of a programme of acquisition, although, at this time, the Council does not foresee the need to acquire more property. The Council thus has no meaningful shortfall between resources and need. When sporadic shortfalls do occur they are dealt with as in 8.1.2, below.

**8.1.1** The AMG also keeps under review under-performing and investment property to ensure that the assets are maximised.

**8.1.2** Any discrepancy between need and available resources is identified through a developmental process. Shortfalls are identified initially through the resource demands of schemes seeking approval through the Corporate Management Team or Cabinet, as appropriate. If funded, such schemes are included in Departmental Service Plans and actioned.

**8.2 Option Appraisal Toolkit-** A toolkit developed in-house to formalise and define the decision-making process.

**8.3 Option Appraisal/Capital Programme** - the option appraisal toolkit allows data to be fed into the Capital Programme. The greatest areas of mismatch are given earliest priority. The Council reviews the Capital Programme quarterly and revises it annually to ensure coherence with the budget setting process. However, the Council continues building on these robust mechanisms for option appraisal. These include formal annual

bidding arrangements for projects which need to demonstrate revenue as well as capital costs and, where appropriate, pay-back profiles.

**8.4 Programmes and Priorities** - for maintaining the Council's general fund works, 10 year programmes for major buildings (showing essential and desired works) are re-evaluated each year and are the subject of appraisal and approval by Members, as appropriate .. Programmes for housing work have also been agreed by committee each year after a thorough prioritisation process by officers, based on condition and sensitivity to tenants needs. Such programmes are incorporated into relevant Service Plans in order to achieve a clear, open and auditable approach to performance management.

**8.5 Usage** - The Estate Terrier records and identifies all rented properties and when the lease or rents are due for review. Those properties not reaching their full potential are individually reported to Members for their consideration and are reported annually at Performance Review. In addition, the Option Appraisal toolkit and Capital programme mechanism, allows underused property to be quickly identified and evaluated.

**8.6 Disposal** - The Council regularly disposes of property it considers to be surplus to its requirements. The Council, for example, has been in discussion for some months with private and public sector partners regarding the disposal of the Ashdown Business Park land, land at North Street, Hailsham, land at Pine Grove, Crowborough and land at Luxford Field, Uckfield (these last three to facilitate mixed town centre developments).

**8.7 Shared Use** – The Council has a number of properties, which are shared facilities with other organisations, for example, the use of part of the Council's Pine Grove office for County Library Services. In addition, the Council operates surgery arrangements by the deployment of officers of the Revenue and Benefits section and Planning Department in the Polegate Town Council offices. Discussions are proceeding with East Sussex County Council and other partner organisations to explore other opportunities for shared facilities and joint working.

**8.8 Acquisitions** – Following the successful acquisition and development of a suitable site in Rotherfield for a car park, currently the Council has no other plans for acquiring any other new property assets.

**8.9 Capital Programme** - the Council's adopted mechanism for developing the Capital programme is based upon asset management options and forward budgetary planning. Parts of the Capital Programme reflect initiatives which were already being developed and have not formally been assessed against this mechanism. However, the Capital programme has been reviewed and amended as necessary to reflect the findings of the AM option appraisals. Formerly the responsibility for capital monitoring has been achieved within service areas and regularly reported to Members, however the AMG now accommodates all capital programme development and monitoring.

**8.9.1.** The current Capital Programme is founded on the Council's typically 10 year programmes for major buildings together with ad hoc bids for other schemes which are fully considered each year as part of the budget preparation. 5 year financial forecasting and the findings from the Option Appraisal toolkit allows Members to make value judgements between competing schemes.

**8.9.2.** Output targets are reviewed each year by Members at the Annual Performance Review cycle and are incorporated into the Service Plans. These target levels are currently under review

**8.10 Backlogs** - Reviewed annually and reported where necessary

## **9. Performance Information**

This section is currently under review

## **10. Review Arrangement for AMP**

The AMP will be reviewed annually but will be based on a 3-5 year rolling programme. As a key strategy document, the final responsibility for the AMP will rest with the Council. A copy of the AMP, as well as being available to Councillors and AMG members, is provided to every Chief Officer to ensure that all those who have a direct interest or responsibility for property matters are familiar with the Council's requirements.

## **11. Strategic Action Plan 2006 - 2008**

This is currently under review:

