

Transfer of assets from EDDC to Beer Parish Council

Further to the Parish Council meeting on the 3rd November 2020, when the Asset Transfer proposal was discussed, the Parish Council would like to clarify the position regarding the planned consultation and take the opportunity to explain the reasons for promoting Asset Transfer.

Beer Parish Council has been discussing Asset Transfer for about 5 years, as can be evidenced from the Council minutes. The explanatory notes included in the Parish Magazine were available at the Parish Council surgery in March. Whilst the Council has tried to keep everyone informed, we appreciate there is still a lack of understanding about what Asset Transfer is and what it means for the village and this is causing concern and confusion.

Asset Transfer refers to the transfer of ownership of certain land asset in the village from EDDC to Beer PC. These include; the Jubilee, Jubilee play park, toilets, Charlies Yard, Beach Court car park, part of Beer Head car park and Starre Bank.

The benefit of ownership means Beer PC will decide what can be done with the assets. At present they are owned by EDDC and EDDC has the right to develop, dispose of or operate them as they see fit. This means that if EDDC saw a commercial opportunity on any of the sites they could let or sell to any commercial bidder. Transfer will put these decisions in the hands of Beer.

Transfer of ownership will be at no direct cost to Beer PC but Beer will be responsible for all future management and maintenance, including the additional costs. Beer PC has negotiated a “dowry payment” to cover these costs. This starts at 100% of the estimated costs tapering to approximately 42% of estimated costs by year 10. Estimated costs are based on EDDC estimates of their current work costs. The work input by EDDC will remain the same in year 1 and taper to nil by year 5 when Beer PC will take over all work through additional staff and/or local contracts.

This means we will have to generate revenue from the areas of land to cover the balance, this will be through offering commercial concessions and by increasing event and parking income. It will **NOT** be through the sale of any assets.

Generating income is to cover costs, developing new concessions or event opportunities is to develop interest and entertainment opportunities for our businesses, residents and visitors.

To address all issues we will prepare an information sheet and consultation document in December. The consultation will address two main issues:

1. The principle of asset transfer. Do we want to own our assets or have them owned by EDDC, accepting that there will be added financial and management responsibilities?
2. What sort of activities does the village want to see on the various sites?

Extracts from the draft heads of terms

Transfer of the following assets freehold / or under very long lease to Beer Parish Council:

- Beer Head Car Park (southern strip and central areas only)
- Starre Bank
- Play area above Pumping Station along with possibly the Underleys play area (HRA still to be consulted and will be subject to separate decision making)
- Jubilee Gardens PC's

- Jubilee Gardens Access Hardstanding view point – includes income received currently of £700 per annum from RNLI
- Jubilee Gardens
- Charlies Yard
- Beach Court Car Park

The proposal is for the freehold or long leasehold transfer of those assets. The Parish Council would have flexibility to sell / sublet / assign provided that any financial returns are reinvested in the Beer community and that the uses remain broadly for public enjoyment and benefit and that the key services remain in some form. That said, as an example, Beer Parish Council would be permitted to convert the public convenience building into a café/ ice cream kiosk provided that a public convenience provision was retained either within the building or close to – it could be smaller and the income generation from the remainder of the building could be used to support ongoing costs. Likewise, Charlies Yard could be built on provided that the use benefitted the community.

For avoidance of doubt, areas to be retained by EDDC include:

- Beach – due to complexities around day-to-day management and because of regularisation of agreements being needed but this does generate a commercial income
- Cliff – Parish Council are not prepared to accept this liability. This is a concern to EDDC, has been worked through at length and has now been accepted by Officers as part of this wider asset transfer
- Majority of Beer Head Car Park
- Bottom section of Beach Access Road
- Central Car Park

General Conditions

There would be no circumstances whereby EDDC would be required to take the assets back. If the Parish Council fail to maintain the assets suitably to enable public access (save for natural disasters / uncontrollable circumstances) then EDDC for 1st 10 years only could if it chose to (but with no obligation) step in, do works and recharge, having 1st given notice of said intention.