

Best Value Introduction

Audit Scotland describes Best Value as “ensuring that there is good governance and effective management of resources, with a focus on improvement, to deliver the best possible outcomes for the public.” The duty of Best Value applies to all public bodies in Scotland. It is a statutory duty for local authorities, such as councils.

In 2016 a revised framework for the auditing of Best Value was approved by the Accounts Commission. A key element of the framework is the publication of a Best Value Assurance Report (BVAR) for the council at least once during a five-year period. It is informed by the Annual Audit Report, other statutory reports and Audit Scotland reports including the Local Government Overview series (performance, finance) published annually.

The BVAR will be considered by the Commission, in public, and action may be required of the council. The fieldwork for the BVAR for Aberdeenshire Council will take place between February and April 2019.

The fieldwork for the development of the BVAR includes:

- Interviews with councillors, senior officers and partner organisations;
- Observation of council, committee and board meetings;
- Review of documents and performance data and;
- Focus groups with councillors, officers and community groups.

Each council's BVAR incorporates an analysis of the Best Value characteristics aligned to the themes of:

- Vision and strategic direction;
- Performance;
- Use of resources;
- Partnership working;
- Improvement and transformation

Case Study Criteria

As part of our preparation for our Best Value Assurance Report we will be compiling a narrative to show the council's transformation since the last Best Value Audit. In order to do this, the Best Value Key Officer group will be sourcing case studies from all services. To ensure that the case study stays relevant to Best Value's key themes, the below criteria has been set out:

- Please ensure that a relevant link with BV criteria is demonstrated throughout
- Where relevant, please complete each section of the template as fully as possible
- Each section must contain narrative along with relevant links of evidence
- Each case study should show a consistent and clear link to at least one of the council's [11 priorities](#) (point 6).

Case Study Template
Formartine Asset Transfer (concluded)
Ythan Centre, Ellon – Ellon Baptist Church

How does this link with the criteria of Best Value?

Strategic Direction

In accordance with The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, the council's [Asset Transfer](#) (AT) Policy sets out the council's position in managing AT Requests from Community Transfer Bodies (CTB).

Performance

Working transparently with the CTB to ensure their aspirations for the asset are cognisant of the needs of the wider community and is in keeping with the council's [Corporate Asset Management Plan](#).

Effective Use of Resources

Council officers shared expertise and offered support to the CTB throughout the process, from informal enquiry stage to the point of concluding the conveyancing element of the AT.

Partnership Working

Aberdeenshire Council officers worked collaboratively with the CTB to support them to progress the application work. The Officer Group recommendation was agreed by Formartine Area Committee in November 2018.

Continuous Improvement

How does this link to our priorities?

Support a strong, sustainable, diverse and successful economy

An unused building formerly used by the council for community related work has been taken back in to use. The building is located in the town centre and encourages an increase in footfall within the town.

Encourage active lifestyles and promote well-being with a focus on obesity and mental health

The work of the group is primarily religious based, however all activities and sessions put on are aimed at everyone in the community to participate in. Various types of classes and activities are held.

Work to reduce poverty and inequalities within our communities

A food bank also operates from the building.

What research was undertaken to ensure best practice?

Research associated with the development of the AT Policy led by a Chief Officer.

What was the background to the case story?

Ellon Baptist Church (EBC) lodged an Asset Transfer application for the lease of the Ythan Centre, Station Road, Ellon.
The Ythan Centre was previously occupied by Aberdeenshire Council's Community, Learning and Development (CLD) service, who have since relocated to the Ellon Academy Community Campus. The building has lain vacant and unoccupied since February 2016. EBC are a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SC028365), obtaining Charity status in 1998, whose intended use for the building is primarily as a community and religious hub providing events, educational resources, classes and workshops to local residents of the Ellon area.
EBC previously held their activities and classes for the community in a variety of different halls and buildings across Ellon. By consolidating these venues in to the one building, namely the Ythan Centre, it is anticipated that the activities and classes will see an increase in users due to the central location. This would also increase the footfall in the town centre.

What activity was undertaken?

Formartine Asset Transfer Officer Group carried out an assessment of EBC's AT application to ensure it was robust, and their plans were sustainable. A recommendation was presented to Formartine Area Committee in November 2018, whereby Elected Members agreed to the lease transfer.

How did this contribute to improved outcomes?

An unused town centre building was taken back in to use by a local religious group who had been delivering community development activities across Ellon previously. This transfer allowed EBC to consolidate their activities to the one building to act as a "hub".

How did this assist in delivering value for money?

The Council was able to relinquish the burden of running costs for a vacant building, and support a CTB to realise their aspirations to be able to deliver their activities from a town centre location.

What did we learn?

How to effectively support a CTB throughout the process of AT, and deliver a mutually agreeable solution for both the council and the community in terms of Asset Disposal.

*****Please attach any supporting documents/evidence relevant to the case study*****

<http://publications.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/dataset/asset-transfer-ellon-baptist-church#>

<http://www.ellonbaptistchurch.org.uk/>