

Item 8. a - Progress on Devolution - Report from Chair of Parks and Open Spaces Working Party

This paper has been prepared by the Chair following the last Working Party meeting, considering various views and suggestions of members of the working party for further discussion at Facilities Committee. It does not present a formal recommendation from the working party as the Working Party will not meet before the next Facilities Committee

The Working Party is considering an order of priority for the 90+ properties which could potentially be devolved. In particular they are seeking to group revenue generating properties with revenue negative properties to form a package with minimal impact on the cost of ownership of these properties to Liskeard Town Council in the long term.

For example play areas and plots of open land bring no revenue with them, but incur costs of maintenance, insurance, and security. While Car parks, and tenanted buildings or land bring a revenue stream, though also give rise to obvious and hidden costs which need to be offset against those revenues, thus the net gain may be lower than expected.

In terms of progress Castle Park is the most advanced property in the process, on course to be devolved to LTC at the beginning of April 2022. However it comes with a cost, incorporated in the Facilities budget for 2022/23 at £17,800, and no known revenue, though a nominal provision of £100 has been made to encourage the development of income generating activities.

It was suggested in the last meeting of the Working Party that the Council should defer the Castle Park devolution until a package of other income generating properties can be lined up to defray the costs of operating Castle Park. However this could be expected to substantially delay the process as at this time no other devolution process, and particularly revenue generating properties, are significantly advanced to bring into the pool.

I have consulted with the Divisional Cornwall Councillors on the process and how to expedite devolution and to build a portfolio of properties to meet the above criteria. Resulting from a consultation between Cllr Craker and Steve Foster (CC) it was agreed that any costs which the Town Council took on as a result of the Castle Park transfer would be taken into account when further properties were considered for devolution and that this would be reflected in the agreement between the Town Council and Cornwall Council. The Divisional Councillors considered that the element of goodwill generated by the conclusion of the devolution of Castle Park would reflect positively on the devolution of a subsequent package.

Continuing with Castle Park will demonstrate good faith by the LTC and confirm that the process can be handled by both parties and give confidence that future transfers can be entered into with purpose. We can then seek to draw up a revenue /cost balanced portfolio with Cornwall Council that meets our requirements in an atmosphere of co-operation and trust, having demonstrated that we can manage the process. On this basis this paper recommends continuing the process with Castle Park for devolution in April 2022, providing that there is a clause in the agreement making clear that the costs which the Town Council are taking on will be set against any revenue generating assets included in a future devolution portfolio balanced to match costs with revenue, including the costs of Castle Park.

