

Eastbourne Borough Council Corporate Property and Assets Strategy

December 2023

Introduction

1. Eastbourne Borough Council has a significant portfolio of assets. This is made up of a variety of land and buildings that have been in the ownership of the council for varying lengths of time. Some assets have been owned by the council since it came into being in 1974, and in public ownership since well before that time, and others have been more recently purchased with the aim of promoting regeneration in the town and enabling the tourist economy to flourish.
2. Following the pandemic of 2020, and associated national financial challenges, the council needs to ensure its assets strategy is commensurate with current and future organisational requirements. This strategy is therefore all about the council 'living within its means'.

Purpose

3. The purpose of this strategy is to provide a sustainable way for the council to manage its assets in the short, medium and long term and ensure that borrowing levels remain within strict constraints for the foreseeable future. The council needs to ensure that any assets it retains can be maintained within the spending limits of the authority.
4. The strategy provides a framework within which decisions can be taken around the retention and disposal of assets and is in line with the draft Corporate Plan for 2024 – 2028, which states that *"we will re-imagine [our assets] in a way that better provides for the town's future and enables sustainability in the longer term."*

Types of assets

5. To enable the council to take a systematic approach to its asset portfolio, a categorisation process has been undertaken and has divided the assets into the following 'types'.
 - Income Generation
 - Leisure and Community
 - Public Convenience
 - Car Parks
 - Operational
 - Heritage
 - Miscellaneous

6. For each of these categories, a different set of approaches is appropriate. A summary of these is set out below.

Income Generation

7. This group of assets are mainly leased out, usually on a commercial rent basis, and are owned with the primary purpose of creating income for the council. In order to make decisions on the future of these assets, consideration needs to be given to the income being achieved, against the potential benefit of disposal.

Leisure and Community

8. These assets are owned to enable use by local communities and include green parks and open spaces, the open downland, sports facilities and community spaces. It is unlikely that the council would want to dispose of these assets, although the level of rent subsidy offered in some instances may need to be reviewed.

Public conveniences

9. Public conveniences provide services to residents and visitors, with a significant proportion being on the seafront, supporting the tourism offer. Level of usage will again be an issue with regard to how many of these facilities should be retained. However, the tourism value of these facilities, particularly on the seafront, is not to be underestimated.

Car parks

10. Car parks provide parking facilities for residents and visitors and generate an income to the council. The value of each car park, and the level of return received from each, will need to be considered ahead of any retention or disposal decision.

Operational

11. These buildings and structures are used by the council directly to deliver services to the public. Whether these assets need to be retained will depend on the nature of the service provided in each instance and whether that service is to be continued, either by the council, or by another operator.

Heritage

12. These assets include important parts of the heritage infrastructure of the town, and particularly the seafront, and provide a unique challenge for the council. They are very much valued by the local population but are expensive to manage and not easy to transfer to any alternative ownership.

Miscellaneous

13. This is a small group of assets that do not fit within the other asset types; the priority for the Council is to ensure these assets remain safe.

14. It should be noted that this strategy does not deal with Housing Revenue Account (HRA) assets as these are subject to their own distinct arrangements.

Governance

15. The council recognises the importance of strong governance and clear public accountability in its decision-making. This applies to assets as much as any other area of the council's work. However, due to the commercial sensitivity of some decisions around assets, there may often be a need for early deliberations to be undertaken outside of the public domain. However, wherever possible, decisions are taken in public.

Strategic Property Board

16. The Strategic Property Board brings together key elected members, with officers, to meet regularly to discuss property issues. It is a non-decision-making group which considers issues and options ahead of formal decisions at Cabinet. It is not a public meeting.

Cabinet

17. The Cabinet is made up of 6 Members. Of these, lead responsible for assets sits jointly between The Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources (Property and Asset management (non - heritage) and the Cabinet Member for Enterprise, Community Spaces and Heritage Assets. Both of these members are actively involved in any decisions informally ahead of the Strategic Property Board and Cabinet. Cabinet is responsible for making any decisions with significant resource implications for the Council. These are public meetings.

Stability and Growth Programme

18. Since June 2023 the council has been delivering an improvement and efficiency programme called Stability and Growth (S&G). This grew out of earlier savings programmes developed during and after the covid pandemic. The overall aim of the programme is to tackle the range of financial challenges currently faced by local government, and by Eastbourne in particular, and to ensure the council remains on a stable financial footing for the future.
19. The S&G Programme has 5 pillars, one of which specifically focuses on assets. The Asset pillar is designed to assist the council in determining which assets it should retain, and which it would be preferable to earmark for disposal. This strategy therefore provides a helpful framework for the delivery of the Assets pillar.
20. A further pillar of the S&G programme monitors how the council is progressing in responding to two recent external reviews. The first of these is an

Assurance Review completed by CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) on behalf of the Department of Levelling Up Housing and Communities. This review was a requirement of Government following the Exceptional Financial Support received by the council following the financial challenges of the Pandemic.

21. The initial CIPFA review in 2021 was fully responded to by the council. A follow up review in 2023 recommended a further small number of recommendations, including that the council should produce a thorough, integrated, and strategic approach to property. This strategy has been prepared, in part, as a response to that recommendation.

22. A second recent review – a Peer Challenge by the LGA (Local Government Association) - recommended that the council create strategic frameworks to guide the delivery of key priorities. Again, this strategy responds to that recommendation.

Principles guiding the assets strategy

23. In considering future options around assets, the council must be mindful of the requirements and priorities of the borough. Only in exceptional circumstances will the council retain an asset which requires council subsidy to maintain.

24. Being mindful of this, the strategy has 5 key principles;

- a. The council will ensure any assets it retains have a clear purpose, in line with corporate priorities, and/or provide an income to the council of equal or greater value than the cost to the organisation of holding that asset.
- b. If the council does not have a clear purpose for retaining an asset, it will either sell it, or, if the current purpose of the asset is to be retained, lease it to another provider better placed to deliver the same or similar outcomes for the borough from that asset.
- c. Where an asset is to be retained, efforts will be made to ensure income from that asset is maximised through suitable rental or other forms of income generation (such as ticket sales, membership schemes or other relevant approaches).
- d. In the case of heritage or other relevant specialist assets, the council will not normally invest extensively itself, but will endeavour to secure alternative funding mechanisms which minimise the impact of these assets on the council tax payer.
- e. Community asset transfer is to be considered where appropriate to enable transfer of an asset to an organisation where there is an identified social, economic or environmental benefit. The transfer may be, in such cases, at

undervalue justified by the community benefit. This could be via a freehold/leasehold disposal, short lease or licence and would be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Tourism Assets

24. Eastbourne is a popular tourist destination. As such, many of the council's assets support the visitor economy, and form part of the asset types mentioned in this strategy. This includes the Devonshire Park Quarter which offers two theatres, a concert venue, art gallery, conference facilities, an international tennis centre and a pub. This entire complex is owned by the council. A separate strategy (Dec 2023) sets out details of the future plans for this complex, alongside wider plans to enable diversification of the economy to reduce reliance on tourism.

Other public investments/partnership working

25. The council is always open and receptive to opportunities to collaborate with other public agencies over asset developments. Equally, where any council assets may need to take account of future public sector infrastructure requirements in the borough (for example flood defences), the council will take a proactive approach to engaging and working in partnership to achieve the best long term collaborative outcomes.

Asset maintenance

26. Key to a successful asset strategy is a clear plan for maintaining those assets. The council is committed to ensuring all assets within its ownership are maintained in a way that ensures their ongoing viability.

27. Of primary importance is Health and Safety, Statutory Compliance, and ensuring that buildings are weathertight. Beyond this there is secondary priority to reduce the council's carbon footprint where possible. Avoiding degradation of an asset must also be a key consideration. Therefore, any decision regarding retention or disposal will need to consider the long term maintenance implications of retention. As a baseline, a 10 year period will be used for assessment of such implications.

Financial implications

28. As has already been stated, the council must ensure that its asset strategy enables the assets it retains to be affordable. This will be achieved through maximising income potential, either by direct provision of services, or through rental or leasing arrangements.

29. In the past the council has purchased assets as a method of increasing its income potential. It is clear that, in the current and foreseeable future, such investments are unlikely to be either achievable or desirable. For the council to make such investments, a higher level of risk would need to be accepted

than the council is currently able to tolerate, given its financial position.

30. The Council's Asset Strategy supports delivery of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan whilst also ensuring compliance with our Capital and Investment Strategies. It is designed to ensure the council prioritises where and how it uses the council's financial resources to meet ongoing challenges, ensuring that assets are appropriately identified and monitored to ensure that they are fit for purpose, continue to deliver efficiency and provide value for money. Where assets are no longer fit for purpose or represent poor value for money the council should look at options to dispose or repurpose them as appropriate to unlock remaining value in that asset.
31. Equally where the council is required to invest in new assets it must ensure that that they are fit for the purpose and able to maximise the benefits for Eastbourne Residents. The Council's assets are fundamental to the efficient and effective operation of Council services, providing accommodation for staff, making services accessible to the local community, generating income and enabling development and service contributions by third parties.
32. Financial and other pressures on the council's resources will require all services to be flexible. Services will need to develop operating models that are agile and able to respond to the changing context and needs of the Council. As reductions to public sector spending are likely to continue throughout the lifetime of this Strategy, the Council will have to manage property with fewer resources and will need to learn to target those resources where they will make the greatest positive impact, contribute to the Council's financial resources, improve returns and secure capital receipts.

Appendix

<u>Property</u>	<u>Current Holding Reason</u>
Beachy Head & Downland Car Parks	Car Park
Church St / Vicarage Road Car Park	Car Park
Devonshire Park Car Park, College Road	Car Park
Fishermans Green Car Park	Car Park
Greencroft, Multi Storey Car Park	Car Park
Hyde Gardens Car Park	Car Park
Junction Road Multi Storey Car Park	Car Park
Prince William Parade Car Park	Car Park
Sovereign Centre Car Park	Car Park
Treasure Island Car Park , Royal Parade	Car Park
Wish Tower Car Park, King Edward's Parade	Car Park
Bandstand	Heritage
Dovecot (Listed Grade II), Motcombe Gardens.	Heritage
Redoubt Fortress Museum (Scheduled Monument including Aquarium)	Heritage
The Hermitage (Listed Grade II), Manor Gardens, Borough Lane	Heritage
Wish Tower Museum/Martello Tower	Heritage
1 Grove Road	Income Generation
1 Hampshire Court	Income Generation
13 Seaside Road	Income Generation
137-139 Seaside Road	Income Generation
1-5 Seaside Road	Income Generation
17a and 19a Milfoil Drive	Income Generation
2 Hampshire Court	Income Generation
2 Kent Court	Income Generation
204-206 Terminus Road	Income Generation
210 Terminus Road	Income Generation
212 Terminus Road	Income Generation
214 Terminus Road	Income Generation
216 Terminus Road	Income Generation
220 Terminus Road	Income Generation
222 Terminus Road	Income Generation
224 Terminus Road	Income Generation
226 Terminus Road	Income Generation
228 Terminus Road	Income Generation
232 Terminus Road	Income Generation
234 Terminus Road	Income Generation

<u>Property</u>	<u>Current Holding Reason</u>
236 Terminus Road	Income Generation
238 Terminus Road	Income Generation
240 Terminus Road	Income Generation
244 Terminus Road	Income Generation
246 Terminus Road	Income Generation
248 Terminus Road	Income Generation
250 Terminus Road	Income Generation
254 Terminus Road	Income Generation
256 Terminus Road	Income Generation
258-262 Terminus Road	Income Generation
2-9 Fife Court	Income Generation
51-53 Seaside Road	Income Generation
67-69 Seaside	Income Generation
94-99 Holly Place	Income Generation
95,97 and 99a Milfoil Drive	Income Generation
Aerial Site, Bullock Down Farm	Income Generation
Avenue Snacks	Income Generation
Bandstand East Kiosk	Income Generation
Bandstand West Kiosk	Income Generation
Bistrot Pierre Restaurant	Income Generation
Black Robin Farm	Income Generation
Boat Berths, East of Sovereign Centre	Income Generation
Bullock Down Farm	Income Generation
Butts Brow Emergency Repeater Station	Income Generation
Carlisle Road Kiosk, adj. Lifeboat Museum	Income Generation
Carpet Gardens Kiosk above Shelter E, opp. Terminus Road	Income Generation
Chalk Farm	Income Generation
Chalk Farm Hotel, Coopers Hill	Income Generation
Chalk Farm Nursery	Income Generation
Congress Theatre	Income Generation
Cornish Farm	Income Generation
David Lloyd Club	Income Generation
Devonshire Park Locker Room	Income Generation
Devonshire Park Theatre	Income Generation
Devonshire Place Kiosk above Shelter D, opp. Hartington Place	Income Generation
Driving Test Centre Wartling Road	Income Generation
Eastbourne Downs Golf Course	Income Generation
Factory 3 Faraday Close	Income Generation
Factory, 11 Marshall Road	Income Generation

<u>Property</u>	<u>Current Holding Reason</u>
Factory, 15 Marshall Road	Income Generation
Factory, 9 Marshall Road	Income Generation
Fishermans Green Ex Tennis Kiosk (Nascafe)	Income Generation
Former Tourist Information Centre	Income Generation
Fort Fun	Income Generation
Gildredge Park Cafe	Income Generation
Hampden Park Café	Income Generation
Holywell Bathing Huts	Income Generation
Holywell Cafe	Income Generation
Holywell Chalets	Income Generation
Howard Square Kiosk above Shelter B	Income Generation
Marine Road Kiosk, adj Shelter G, opp. Queen's Gardens	Income Generation
Martello Inn Car Park	Income Generation
Natural Fitness Centre	Income Generation
Net Shop 5 Fishing Station	Income Generation
Net Shop No 1	Income Generation
Net Shop No 2	Income Generation
Net Shop No 3	Income Generation
Net Shop No 4	Income Generation
Net Shop No 6	Income Generation
Seafront Shelter B, West Rocks Club	Income Generation
Seafront Shelter E, Boardwalk Cafe, opp. Terminus Road	Income Generation
Seafront Shelter F, Boardwalk Pizzeria, adj. Carpet Gardens	Income Generation
Seafront Shelter G Opp. Queen's Gardens (pt)	Income Generation
Seafront Shelter G, Opp. Queen's Gardens (pt)	Income Generation
Shop 1 Antrim Court	Income Generation
Shop 12 Antrim Court	Income Generation
Shop 13 Antrim Court	Income Generation
Shop 6 Antrim Court	Income Generation
Shop 7 Antrim Court	Income Generation
Shop 8 Kent Court	Income Generation
Spyglass Iconic Beach Hut 2	Income Generation
St Aubyns Kiosk, adj Slipway opp. St Aubyn's Road	Income Generation
Swiss Chalet Kiosk, opp. Hartington Place	Income Generation
The Beachy Head Pub	Income Generation
The Boat House	Income Generation
The Glass House	Income Generation
The Stage Door Pub	Income Generation
Treasure Island Amusement Complex	Income Generation
Trinity Place Service Station	Income Generation
Unit 1 Hampden Retail Park (Pure Gym)	Income Generation

<u>Property</u>	<u>Current Holding Reason</u>
Unit 2 Hampden Retail Park (Dreams)	Income Generation
Unit 3 Hampden Retail Park (Halfords)	Income Generation
Unit 3a Hampden Retail Park (East Sussex College Group)	Income Generation
Unit 4 Hampden Retail Park (B&Q)	Income Generation
Unit 5 Hampden Retail Park (Costa)	Income Generation
Welcome Building	Income Generation
What Unearthed Beach Hut 3	Income Generation
Winter Garden Theatre	Income Generation
Wish Tower Kiosk adj. Slipway opp. Lifeboat Museum	Income Generation
All Saints Park, King Edwards Parade	Leisure and Community
Allotment Society Office Building	Leisure and Community
Angling Club House	Leisure and Community
Archery Recreation Ground All-Weather Pitches	Leisure and Community
Archery Recreation Ground, Seaside	Leisure and Community
Ashgate Rd Allotments	Leisure and Community
Beachy Head Open Downland	Leisure and Community
Buzz Active (Spray Water Sports)	Leisure and Community
Churchdale Rd Allotments	Leisure and Community
College Green, St Anne's Road	Leisure and Community
Devonshire Park Tennis Courts	Leisure and Community
Donkey Field, Eastbourne Park	Leisure and Community
Eastbourne Sports Park, Part owned and managed by EBC	Leisure and Community
Eastbourne United FC, The Oval Club House, Pavilion, Spectator Stand & Pitch	Leisure and Community
Ebne Sov. Sailing Clubhouse (east site)	Leisure and Community
Elm Grove, Playing Field (South Area)	Leisure and Community
Fisherman's Club	Leisure and Community
Fisherman's Green Tennis and Basket Ball Courts	Leisure and Community
Five Acre Field, Lottbridge Drove	Leisure and Community
Gildredge Park	Leisure and Community
Gildredge Park Bowling Greens & Pav.	Leisure and Community
Gildredge Park Bowls Machine Store adj to bowling greens	Leisure and Community
Gildredge Park Tennis Courts and Pavilion	Leisure and Community
Gorringe Rd Allotments	Leisure and Community
Green St Farm Allotments Filching Road	Leisure and Community
Hampden Park and Lake	Leisure and Community
Hampden Park Bowling Greens and Pavilion	Leisure and Community
Hampden Park Community Hall, Brodrick Road	Leisure and Community
Hampden Park Sports Centre	Leisure and Community
Hampden Park Tennis Courts	Leisure and Community
Hampden Park Tennis Courts (hard)	Leisure and Community

<u>Property</u>	<u>Current Holding Reason</u>
Hampden Park Timber Pavilion	Leisure and Community
Hampden Pk Rugby Club, 4 pitches, pavilions & Car Pk	Leisure and Community
Hampden Pk Rugby pitches (Council)	Leisure and Community
Hartfield Square Gardens.	Leisure and Community
Helen Gardens	Leisure and Community
Helen Gardens Bowling Pavilion and Green	Leisure and Community
Heritage Centre	Leisure and Community
Highfield Estate Allotments, Bodiam Crescent	Leisure and Community
Holly Park	Leisure and Community
Howard Square Gardens.	Leisure and Community
Hydneye Lake (Shinewater Park)	Leisure and Community
Indoor Bowls Hall, Hampden Park.	Leisure and Community
Italian Gardens	Leisure and Community
Langney Community Hall	Leisure and Community
Langney District Pond	Leisure and Community
Life Boat Museum, Wish Slope.	Leisure and Community
Lifeboat House, Fisherman's Green	Leisure and Community
Lifeguard Station and First Aid Post (previously Bathing Station)	Leisure and Community
Lifeguards HQ adj. Rowing Club	Leisure and Community
MacMillan Drive Recreation Ground	Leisure and Community
Manor Gardens Tennis Courts	Leisure and Community
Manor Gardens, Borough Lane.	Leisure and Community
Manor Rd Allotments	Leisure and Community
Marchants Field Allotments, Tutts Barn Lane	Leisure and Community
Motcombe Gardens & Pond	Leisure and Community
Motcombe Gdns Bowling Green & Huts	Leisure and Community
Motcombe Swimming Pool & House, Motcombe Road.	Leisure and Community
Old Town Community Centre	Leisure and Community
Old Town Library	Leisure and Community
Old Town Recreation Ground Pavilion, Longland Road	Leisure and Community
Old Town Recreation Ground Tennis Courts	Leisure and Community
Old Town Recreation Ground, Longland Road	Leisure and Community
Parade Bowling Club	Leisure and Community
Princes Park & Lake.	Leisure and Community
Princes Park Bowling Greens and Pavilion(RSBC)	Leisure and Community
Princes park Model Power Boat Clubs	Leisure and Community
Priory Heights Grazing Area	Leisure and Community
Priory Rd Allotments	Leisure and Community
Redoubt Centenary Field (Redoubt Gardens)	Leisure and Community
Regency Park Community Centre	Leisure and Community

<u>Property</u>	<u>Current Holding Reason</u>
Roselands Recreation Ground	Leisure and Community
Rowing Club adj. Lifeguards HQ	Leisure and Community
Scout and Guide Hall	Leisure and Community
Sea Cadets Headquarters	Leisure and Community
Seaside Recreation Ground Pavilion, Whitley Road	Leisure and Community
Seaside Recreation Ground, Whitley Road	Leisure and Community
Sevenoaks Rd Recreation Ground	Leisure and Community
Shinewater Community Centre	Leisure and Community
Shinewater Park	Leisure and Community
Shinewater Sports Centre (with Community Centre)	Leisure and Community
Slindon Crescent Grazing Area	Leisure and Community
Social Centre for Blind	Leisure and Community
Sovereign bathing huts	Leisure and Community
Sovereign Centre	Leisure and Community
Sovereign Harbour Community Centre	Leisure and Community
Sovereign Park	Leisure and Community
St John Ambulance Headquarters	Leisure and Community
Summerdale Allotments Gorringe Road	Leisure and Community
The Beachy Head Story	Leisure and Community
Towner	Leisure and Community
Tutts Barn Allotments, Gorringe Road	Leisure and Community
Upperton Gardens	Leisure and Community
Wellcombe Allotments Welcombe Upper Dukes Drive	Leisure and Community
West Langney Levels (formerly known as Langney Mount)	Leisure and Community
Western lawns	Leisure and Community
Westlords Recreation Ground	Leisure and Community
Whitbread Hollow Playing Field	Leisure and Community
Whitbread Hollow, Bird Ringers Hut	Leisure and Community
Willingdon Trees Community Centre	Leisure and Community
Wilmington Square Gardens	Leisure and Community
Winkney Farm Recreation Ground, Tugwell Road/Wilton Ave.	Leisure and Community
Wishtower bathing huts	Leisure and Community
Youth Hostel	Leisure and Community
Beachy Head Underground Bunker	Miscellaneous
Redoubt Colonnade	Miscellaneous
Crematorium Buildings Langney	Operational
Downland Water Supply network	Operational
Langney Cemetery Chapel and Columbarium	Operational
Ocklynge Cemetery Chapel	Operational
Seafront Offices	Operational

<u>Property</u>	<u>Current Holding Reason</u>
The Point, Devonshire Park	Operational
Town Hall	Operational
Winter Garden Racquets Court	Operational
Bandstand Public Conveniences (disabled east), Grand Parade	Public Convenience
Bandstand Public Conveniences (Gents east), Grand Parade	Public Convenience
Bandstand Public Conveniences (Ladies west), Grand Parade	Public Convenience
Beachy Head Public Convenience (with Disabled)	Public Convenience
Changing Places Toilet Seafront	Public Convenience
Devonshire Park Public Conveniences, College Road	Public Convenience
Fishermans Green Public Conveniences (with Disabled), Royal Parade	Public Convenience
Gildredge Park Public Conveniences	Public Convenience
Hampden Park Public Conveniences (part of Café - with Disabled), Hampden Park Drive	Public Convenience
Helen Gardens Public Conveniences (Part of Pavilion), King Edward's Parade	Public Convenience
Hyde Gardens Public Conveniences at rear of TIC (with Disabled)	Public Convenience
Lower Holywell Public Conveniences (with Disabled)	Public Convenience
Old Town Recreation Ground Public Conveniences part of Pavilion	Public Convenience
Prince William Parade Public Conveniences with Disabled	Public Convenience
Princes Park Public Conveniences (with Disabled)	Public Convenience
Seaside Recreation Ground Public Conveniences	Public Convenience
The Pier Public Conveniences (disabled east)	Public Convenience
The Pier Public Conveniences (Gents west)	Public Convenience
The Pier Public Conveniences (Ladies east)	Public Convenience