

## **COUNTY COUNCIL – 10 MAY 2016**

### **QUESTION FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

#### **1. Question from Rita Ellis, Lewes, East Sussex**

What lessons do you believe have been learnt from the failure of signing a Community Asset Transfer with Subud Britain in relation to the former St Anne's School site, Lewes after nearly three years of lengthy and time consuming negotiations and does the Council now intend to re-run the tender under the terms of the Community Asset Transfer Policy published in 2014?

#### **Response by Councillor Elkin, Lead Member for Resources**

Whilst it may appear as though the negotiations have taken three years, it should be clarified that due to a number of challenges and a public scrutiny review, the negotiations have only been active for 18 months of this period.

Community Asset Transfers are complex by their nature and this was especially so for the St Anne's site due to the complexities with the site; the buildings and structures on the site; and the development of a specification for community services to be delivered from the site.

Both East Sussex County Council (ESCC) and Subud wanted to ensure the negotiations were given the opportunity to succeed in the best interests of meeting the aspirations of the Lewes community (expressed via public meetings and the community-led St Anne's Steering Group). We therefore allowed sufficient time to developing options that would provide a sustainable future for the site and the services to be delivered on it. The process could have been delivered more speedily but this would have been at the expense of giving the negotiations the greatest opportunity to be successful.

ESCC is a learning organisation and we always seek to capture lessons from activity that has either been successful or not successful. Through our experience of the negotiations relating to the St Anne's site, we are now better able to manage expectations around the timescales required to complete a Community Asset Transfer, and have been able to develop improved forms of legal contracts and management agreements that would support any future Community Asset Transfer processes.

The County Council will now be reviewing options for the future use and development of the site before determining a new way forward.