Sefton Council

Asset Management Strategy

Effective Date: February 2026

Prepared by: Property and Strategic Asset Management Team

Next Review due February 2027

1. Introduction

This Asset Management Strategy ('the Strategy') sets out the vision and aspirations for the effective management of the Council's corporate asset portfolio and the role it plays in supporting and shaping the Council's agenda for the 2030 vision.

Aside from its staff the Council's next biggest resource is its land and property, therefore it is vital that this resource is managed and used effectively and efficiently to ensure that the Council derives maximum benefit from its assets in support of its strategic aims and priorities.

The continued pressure on Local Authority finances makes it critical that the Council has a robust strategic approach to ensure the correct decisions are taken regarding its property asset base.

The Council has developed its Transformation Programme 2024-2027, which will support delivery of the Corporate Plan, and will also be the vehicle to deliver financial sustainability. In terms of the management of its assets Council's Transformation Programme 2024-2027 plans to introduce a Corporate Landlord approach and says:

"The way the council manages its assets is important. The council needs to ensure that its assets are managed as corporate resources, the right stakeholders are involved, and decisions are made in the context of the council's priorities and corporate plan.

The Corporate Landlord approach requires significant change in culture within the council, along with significant investment of both time and resources to progress through to practical implementation.

The Corporate Landlord model is used more commonly in the private sector particularly by large organisations, however more recently a number of Local Authorities have recognised the benefits and already adopted this way of working."

The Strategy will provide a framework for the planning, prioritisation, management and funding of the Council's asset base, within the context of the Transformation Plan 2024 – 2027 and the adoption of the Corporate Landlord approach.

The Strategy also supports and informs the Council's Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP).

2. Aims of the Strategy

The key aims of the Asset Management Strategy are to:

- Enhance the opportunities for communities to access the Council's services in either our own or partner buildings.
- Maximise the use of space within buildings by enabling better and innovative ways of working.
- Ensure that buildings meet all Health and Safety requirements and other legislative standards.
- Provide a clear context within which the Council's property assets can be managed to ensure that all asset-based investment is targeted towards meeting the Council's priorities and/or legislative requirements.
- Maximise the use of revenue resources by establishing effective arrangements for the management of Council assets.

3. Types of Assets

The use and management of the Authority's assets plays a fundamental role in delivery of corporate and local priorities, as well as shaping and influencing the quality of life and place for local residents, communities and businesses. The property asset base is split into two key categories;

- **Operational Properties** — Owned or leased buildings that are required to enable the delivery of Council services. These are typically the main administrative buildings but also encompass specialised facilities such as depots and schools.
- **Non-operational Properties** — Also known as the investment portfolio, these assets are held because they generate an income, return or present an opportunity for capital gain through redevelopment. The portfolio is made up of assets held by the Council and it's predecessor authorities, and is not typical of most commercial investment portfolios. The portfolio includes properties subject to restrictive covenants.

There are a small number of assets where there is a cross over between both categories.

4. Approach to the Strategy

It is critical that the assets the Council retains are fit for purpose, provide value for money and meet/support both business and community needs. Decisions to invest and improve the asset base must be made on a robust and transparent basis.

Under the Transformation Programme 2024-2027 the Council will adopt a Corporate Landlord approach, which will include the on-going property review process and challenge the use and retention of assets.

The Council will also endeavour to right size its operational estate and through its programme of capital investment, invest in its operational assets so that they are fit for purpose, enabling continuity of service delivery to meet corporate priorities.

An ongoing review of the Council's accommodation provision will look at opportunities to rationalise occupation and release surplus accommodation from the Council's buildings. This will include identifying opportunities for shared use of Council facilities to enable the efficient provision of key services, as well as potential co-locations with other public and private sector partners via the 'One Public Estate' agenda.

The Strategy will also be influenced by service reviews, either as part of budget preparation, one-off exercises, or in support of the Sefton 2030 Vision. Where service reviews identify new models of operation or new ways of working, the property and strategic asset management team will work with the service delivery team to ensure that the assets are fit for purpose and suitable and sufficient for service delivery.

At times, some assets may be identified as potentially surplus to requirements and as each site will have different characteristics, the approach for each may vary. Surplus assets will be considered in terms of their suitability for Community Asset Transfer and open market, or non-competitive disposal. The outcome of these considerations will be reported through the relevant decision-making processes in accordance with the Council's Constitution.

The Council's approach to the retention of assets is based around the ability to clearly demonstrate that they:

- Support and meet the Corporate objectives of the Council.
- Contribute to the effective delivery of business provision (i.e. the condition and performance of the asset does not impede service delivery).
- Provide a strategic landholding in key locations in the borough.
- Provide value for money (in respect of their current or future investment, capital value, revenue generation and/or ability to influence regeneration).

Where assets do not satisfy the above criteria consideration will be given to the asset either being better utilised to free up accommodation elsewhere, or disposed of. The disposal process, including the rationale for using a particular method of disposal is set out in the Asset Disposal Policy. In addition to capital receipts, the sale of assets should reduce revenue expenditure.

5. Governance

The Council's governance arrangements are established and set out in the Council's Constitution and Financial Procedure Rules. Responsibility for the Asset Management Strategy rests with the Council.

6. Key Challenges

In developing the Strategy, the Council must take account of and accommodate a variety of factors and challenges which impact on the asset base. These include:

National level

The financial strains on Local Government have placed increased pressure on asset management in support of service delivery.

In addition, Legislation also affects the management of the Council's property holdings. These include:

- The Localism Act 2011
- Disposal and Appropriation of School Land — Changes in Legislation (Education Act 2011 and new Schedule 1 to the Academies Act 2010)
- Health and Safety Legislation and Fire Safety Regulations

Corporate Level

Asset and Property Maximisation

The Council will consider the property/assets opportunities arising from all projects within its Transformation programme and its service planning. It will look to maximise opportunities to improve operational efficiency, reduce revenue costs and maximise the capital and income potential.

This will inform asset related decisions, and maximise capital receipt/revenue saving opportunities arising from:

- The reduction in physical space requirements as a result of service re-design;
- The reduction in space made possible by the adoption of 'new ways of working' with improved ICT systems and infrastructure; and
- The need to do something very different to maximize our assets.

Property is part of the infrastructure that helps to support the delivery of transformational change. It enables the organisation to provide a wider contribution to the overall aspirations of the Council's regeneration ambitions.

Agile Working

Sefton has adopted agile working and place-based working. This enables the Council to work more closely with customers and other public-sector partner organisations with the added benefit of maximising asset use within a reduced building footprint across the portfolio.

In the medium-term, and after significant engagement with partners, the opportunities to co-locate services will be considered in-order to create lean and efficient services for residents and businesses.

7. Investment Priorities

Asset Review

An Asset Review is being undertaken as part of the adoption of the Corporate Landlord Model. This review will look at all of the councils assets, to understand their place in the delivery of operational services or as an investment, and this work will include working with service's to look at their individual asset management planning, establishing whether the assets still meet the needs of the service, and where assets are deemed to be surplus, they will form part of the on-going Disposal Programme, in line with our Asset Disposal policy.

Delivery of Key Strategic Priorities

Building upon the momentum generated in previous years in regenerating key areas within the Borough, the Council is committed to use its asset base to deliver its strategic priorities. As part of that process, it will seek to align funding opportunities to those initiatives, including the allocation of specific land sites and land receipts to support its transformation programme and service planning.

New Investment in Assets

In addition to the current asset portfolio, strategic acquisitions and development will also be considered where it aligns with the Council's core purpose.

In terms of new capital bids for investment in property assets (current or proposed acquisitions), these will be submitted in accordance with the Council's governance process.

8. Funding Options

If the Council is to continue to invest in its property asset base it will need to consider alternative and innovative solutions to supplement more traditional funding sources as part of its resourcing strategy. All appropriate options will be explored as part of the individual Business Case.

9. Key Strategy & Policy Documents

This Strategy acts as an overarching document that sets the framework in which the Council's key, property asset-based strategies, policies and procedures are developed, operated and reviewed.

The disposal process, including the rationale for using a particular method of disposal is set out in the Asset Disposal Policy. Some Assets may be offered for lease as Community Assets in accordance with the Community Asset Policy.

10. Review

The Strategy will be reviewed annually, adapting to the review of the Council's strategic objectives, changes in policy, professional practice and changes in the economy and property markets. It does not need to be redrafted annually if the existing documentation remains current.

11. Summary

This Asset Management Strategy demonstrates and sets the framework which enables the Council to build a long-term asset management programme to ensure the efficient and effective use of assets to support the achievement of the Council's corporate priorities. This will help shape the future of Sefton and support the Communities as set out in the Corporate Plan.