

## **NORTH SOMERSET COUNCIL DECISION**



**DECISION OF:** COUNCILLOR MIKE BELL LEADER OF THE COUNCIL. IN ACCORDANCE WITH CAB24 10 SEPTEMBER 2025 CABINET.

**WITH ADVICE FROM:** THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT, ASSETS AND TRANSPORT SERVICES

**DECISION NO:** 25/26 EAT 224

**SUBJECT:** DELEGATED APPROVAL OF THE FRAMEWORK FOR ASSET AND SERVICE TRANSFER IN NORTH SOMERSET (LOCAL DEVOLUTION PROGRAMME)

**KEY DECISION:** NO

**REASON:** Local Devolution Policy Framework approval was a key decision approved at Cabinet on 10 September 2025

### **BACKGROUND:**

On 10 September 2025, Cabinet approved the recommendation to delegate approval of the Local Devolution Programme: A Framework for Asset and Service Transfer in North Somerset to the Leader of the Council.

Following initial feedback received from town and parish councils, a second version of the framework was developed (see Appendix 1). This revised version was then subject to two further rounds of engagement:

1. Individual calls were offered to all four town councils and Yatton Parish Council to provide an opportunity for discussion around any concerns, questions, or general feedback on the revised framework. While Weston-super-Mare Town Council were unable to attend any of the three scheduled calls, they were offered further opportunities to engage with the officer team should they wish to do so. In addition, a separate meeting was held with members of the North Somerset Association of Local Councils (NS ALCA) Committee to gather more detailed feedback, although it is noted that this group does not represent all parish councils.
2. Final consultation involved sharing the version 2 framework with all town and parish councils, as well as North Somerset Council ward members, for final comment. No further feedback was received at this stage.

The version 2 framework is now proposed for approval by the Leader of the Council.

### **DECISION:**

To approve the Framework for Asset and Service Transfer in North Somerset.

### **REASONS:**

The main themes of feedback and NSC's officer response is detailed below:

1. Town and parish councils requested freehold as the default position on all assets  
The framework is designed to outline the suite of legal options open to North Somerset and the town/parish councils when considering the future management of an asset or service. Therefore, it must be flexible to cater for all of assets and services within scope and be able to consider the aspirations of smaller parishes, as well as the larger town councils.
2. Town and parish councils felt assets should be transferred at a zero/ nominal cost  
Officers acknowledge that this may be appropriate for assets that carry a cost liability (for example play areas), but not for assets that generate income or have strategic importance (for example income generating assets). North Somerset Council must comply with section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 and the General Disposal Consent 2003, which require best consideration.
3. Town and parish councils have suggested the use of a single legal agreement to cover a group of assets being transferred  
NSC noted there can be one overarching agreement, however each individual asset still had to be subject to its individual due diligence - which will take time and resource. Additionally, it will need to be done so in a manner that is acceptable by the Land Registry.
4. Town and parish councils indicated a preference for one or grouped business cases  
NSC was supportive that a single business case for asset grouping would be more appropriate for some groups of lower-value assets such play areas or a large group of neighbourhood open spaces. The framework was updated to reflect that individual business cases will only be required for complex or high-value assets, where additional scrutiny is necessary. NSC's S151 officer will decide the most appropriate governance route on a case-by-case basis.
5. Town and parish councils requested another pathway that allowed for a group of assets to be transferred together  
NSC is supportive of an additional pathway to clarify the availability of the option to transfer a group of assets. An additional delivery pathway has been added to the framework.

In accordance with the above points, the Framework has been edited and Version 2 proposed for approval.

#### **OPTIONS CONSIDERED:**

No further options are linked to this decision. The Local Devolution Programme is dependent on approval of this framework to deliver any further asset disposals past those named in Phase 1 – quick wins.

#### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

There are no financial implications directly related to the approval of this framework. However, the original decision taken to Cabinet on 10 September approved a delivery plan with resources for Phase1 – quick wins. See 'Background' documents.

#### **Costs**

N/a

## **Funding**

N/a

## **LEGAL POWERS AND IMPLICATIONS**

Legal implications were detailed in the main report taken to the Cabinet on the 10 September. See 'Background' documents.

## **CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

Climate implications were detailed in the main report taken to the Cabinet on the 10 September. See 'Background' documents.

## **CONSULTATION**

Following feedback received from the parishes and then a consolidated feedback document, a second version 2 of the framework has been drafted. This was following internal consultation with:

- Property and asset management
- Financial Services (including S151 Officer)
- Legal Services
- Procurement Services
- Open Space, Natural Environment and Leisure Services
- Highway Services
- Environmental Services
- NSC Senior Leadership
- Leader Cllr Mike Bell

Whilst in development, the project team meet with individual town councils and the NS ALCA Committee to address specific queries and themes of feedback.

A final version of the framework was then shared with all Town and Parish councils, along with all NSC Members for final comment. No further comments were received.

## **WARD MEMBER AND SCRUTINY ENGAGEMENT**

All NSC Members were asked for comments on version 2 of the Framework document. Future decision relating to the disposal of specific assets will follow the Council's governance process to ensure Ward Members are fully engaged with.

## **PROCUREMENT**

N/a

## **RISK MANAGEMENT**

Risk	Inherent risk	Residual risk	Mitigations
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Further delays in approving a final draft of the framework will impact timescales to deliver future assets. Noting some town councils have already challenging delivery timescales	<b>HIGH</b>	<b>MEDIUM</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project team met with larger councils (members of the SSG) to discuss final amendments prior to version 2 being shared</li> <li>• All town/parish and NSC members were asked for final comment – no responses</li> </ul>
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Further risks associated with Local Devolution and the policy framework are detailed in the main report approved by Cabinet on the 10 September 2025.

## EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

Have you undertaken an Equality Impact Assessment?

Yes – refer to the Background Papers

## CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

N/a

## APPENDICES

[Appendix 1 – Framework for asset and service transfer in North Somerset \(Local Devolution\) Version 2](#)

## BACKGROUND PAPERS

[Cabinet – Wednesday 10 September 2025 – Local Devolution Programme Policy and Framework](#)


SIGNATORIES:

DECISION MAKER(S):

Signed  Leader of the Council

Date: 29 October 2025

WITH ADVICE FROM:

Signed:  Director Environment, Assets and Transport Services

Date: 29 October 2025