



Report to:	Cabinet – Monday, 11 July 2022
Lead Cabinet Member:	Councillor John Williams, Lead Cabinet Member for Resources
Lead Officer:	Gareth Bell, Communications and Communities Service Manager

Orwell Beacon, Clunch Pits, Orwell: Asset Transfer to Orwell Parish Council

Key Decision

1. No – this is not a key decision

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that Cabinet agrees to the transfer of ownership of the Orwell Beacon ('the Beacon', also known as the Orwell Millennium Beacon) from South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) to Orwell Parish Council.

Reasons for Recommendations

3. Orwell Parish Council has indicated a desire to take over ownership of the Beacon, which is sited in the Parish of Orwell on Parish Council-owned land, and used by the Parish Council for the benefit of the local community to mark special occasions.
4. Officers consider that the transfer of the ownership of this asset would be in keeping with the Council's Asset Transfer Policy.

Details

5. The Orwell Beacon was donated by Marshalls Aerospace in 1999 and, on 31 December 1999, to the sound of a trumpet fanfare on Tower Bridge, the Queen lit the National Millennium Beacon triggering the lighting of a string of beacons across the UK, including the South Cambridgeshire Beacon in Orwell.
6. Prior to the erection of the Beacon, SCDC ran a process with Parish Councils to decide where the Beacon would be sited. Orwell was chosen because it is one of a few parishes in the district on the meridian line, and with a hill over 200ft high.
7. As the asset is currently in SCDC ownership, any arrangements must be reviewed in line with the Council's Asset Transfer policy, approved at Cabinet on 6 May 2020.

8. It is of particular note that:

- i. The Parish Council will retain the beacon for the purpose for which it is transferred and will manage it to at least the same standard as is currently provided SCDC for other similar property, and in a way that is compliant with all planning, licensing, and other relevant regulations.
- ii. The Beacon has been assessed by the Council's Section 151 Officer as having nil value to SCDC.
- iii. The benefit to the community of the Beacon is deemed to be of greater value than the value of the asset to SCDC.
- iv. The transfer of the Orwell Beacon concerns only the Beacon itself – the Clunch Pit land on which it is situated is owned by Orwell Parish Council and Natural England has designated it a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
- v. Officers are satisfied that there is no other suitably qualified party wishing to take over the ownership and management of the Beacon. Especially as the land it is on is owned by the Parish Council.

9. SCDC has twice undertaken maintenance work to the Beacon following reports that it was not in a safe condition. The latest work was carried out in March 2021 at a cost of £3,168. Any future costs of management and maintenance will be met by Orwell Parish Council.

10. Orwell Parish Council has sound governance and operational management structure to fulfil its legal liabilities associated with the Beacon, such as health and safety and equalities policies, and will demonstrate appropriate accountability to the local community.

11. Local Members and the Lead Members for Finance and for Health, Wellbeing and Community Resilience are in support of this transfer of ownership.

Options

12. Cabinet could:

Option 1 – agree to the transfer of ownership of the Orwell Beacon from South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) to Orwell Parish Council, thereby transferring all ongoing management and maintenance costs.

Option 2 – not approve the asset transfer (either permanently, or deferring a decision pending further information), meaning the Orwell Beacon will remain the responsibility of SCDC until such time as a new decision is made.

Implications

13. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk, equality and diversity, climate change, and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered: -

Financial

14. It is not expected that the net revenue financial implications will be material to the Council. There will be some small savings from no longer having to maintain the Orwell Beacon.

Legal

15. SCDC has followed the Council's Asset Transfer Policy and a legal agreement between SCDC and Orwell Parish Council will formalise the transfer of the asset, subject to approval by councillors.

Alignment with Council Priority Areas

16. Modern and Caring Council: This proposal allows Orwell Parish Council to manage their unique asset for the benefit of the local community.

Background Papers

SCDC Asset Transfer Policy -

[Agenda for Cabinet on Wednesday, 6 May 2020, 9.30 a.m. \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)
[Printed minutes Wednesday 06-May-2020 09.30 Cabinet.pdf \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

Siting of the Beacon in Orwell as detailed in the [General Purposes Committee Meeting Minutes](#) and [General Purpose Committee Meeting Minutes 2](#)

Appendices

None.

Report Author:

Cecilia Murphy-Roads - Development Officer
Telephone: 01954 713379

Kathryn Hawkes – Communities Manager
Telephone: 07702 629022 / 01954 712932 (Teams)