

**REPORT ON BEHALF OF THE ESTATES OFFICER**

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**SUBJECT: OVERVIEW OF THE AUTHORITY'S ESTATES OFFICER**

**INTRODUCTION;**

This paper provides a summary overview of the role undertaken by the Authority's Estates Officer and will be illustrated by two site specific case studies of that work.

**BACKGROUND:**

The work of the Estates Officer was most recently audited by Pembrokeshire County Council Internal Audit Service during the financial year 2010/11. Their findings made no recommendations for change, that a satisfactory framework of controls were in place and an acknowledgement that there was great reliance on the Estates Officer to undertake a wide range of asset management duties reflecting the relatively small yet extremely diverse nature of the portfolio. We are of the opinion that this represents an external endorsement of the work of the estates function and the value which it represents to the Authority.

The Estates Officer works within the Authority's current Property Asset Management Strategy which was adopted in February 2003. It advises that the ownership and use of property is appropriate and effective in the delivery of our core statutory purposes but in doing so we should use the minimum estate necessary and identify opportunities within that portfolio to raise revenue and release capital funds. The Authority's property portfolio is under constant review through the work of the Property and Projects Group which meets monthly and includes a Member Representative.

Extending to more than 80 individual sites the Authority's property portfolio comprises in excess of 100 separate freehold and leasehold registered titles ranging from small rural car parks to the vast majority of the coastal and estuary foreshore. Much of this estate was acquired historically at a rate of approximately 15-20 new sites per decade from the 1960s through to the 1990s and whilst some disposals took place during that era, the historic estate management culture was one of acquisition and retention. Over recent years the Estates Officer has applied a questioning approach to our existing portfolio, resulting in a steady flow of disposals. Acquisitions have continued but only as a tool of last resort.

In managing this portfolio the Estates Officer provides a comprehensive in-house land agency and estates function. The areas of work covered includes rating, boundary issues, encroachments, lease renewals, rent reviews, compulsory purchase orders, acquisitions, disposals, negotiating licence agreements, setting up

and maintaining accurate property management systems, liaising with external property lawyers and preparing annual asset valuations.

Beyond the demands of our in house property portfolio, many of these same skills are applied by the Estates Officer to support the Authority across a broad range of work including public rights of way, development management, development planning, conservation and advising community groups within the National Park.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

That Members endorse the positive and cost effective contribution made by the Estates Officer towards the delivery of our Park Purposes and that an objective and challenging attitude should continue to be encouraged at all times when reviewing the contemporary contribution that our in-house portfolio makes to the delivery of Park purposes.

*For further information on this report, please contact Gary Meopham (Estates Officer)*