

BOROUGH OF KETTERING

RURAL FORUM

Meeting held: 4th February 2016

Present:

Borough Councillors

Councillor Jim Hakewill (*Chair*)
Councillor David Howes
Councillor Mark Rowley

County Councillors

Councillor Christopher Groome

Parish Councillors

Councillor David Watson (Geddington, Newton & Lt. Oakley)
Councillor Sally McKeown (Ashley)
Councillor Angela Beardsmore (Braybrooke)
Councillor Marie Jessop (Braybrooke)
Councillor Hilary Bull (Broughton)
Councillor Robin Shrive (Broughton)
Councillor Carl Ward (Loddington)
Councillor Andrew Macredie (Pytchley)
Councillor Ian Bushby (Warkton)
Councillor James Woolsey (Warkton)
Councillor Nick Richards (Wilbarston)
Councillor Rosalind Willatts (Wilbarston)

Betty West (Clerk to Harrington Parish Council)

Also Present:

Lisa Hyde (Kettering Borough Council)
Sue Lyons (Kettering Borough Council)
Brendan Coleman (Kettering Borough Council)
Mark Dickenson (Kettering Borough Council)
Pina Patel (Kettering Borough Council)
Carole Stephenson (Kettering Borough Council)
David Pope (Forum Administrator-KBC)

15.RF.48 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Richard Barnwell (Great Cransley/Mawsley) and Sue Jackson-Stops (Harrington). Apologies were also received from Grafton Underwood and Weekley Parish Council representatives and Bernard Rengger of Sutton Basset Parish Meeting.

15.RF.49 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None

15.RF.50 **MINUTES**

DJP

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Rural Forum held on 26th November 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair, subject to a minor typographical amendment

15.RF.51 **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

Location of February Rural Forum

Councillor Nick Richards offered apologies on behalf of Wilbarston Parish Council as they had been unable to host this meeting of the Rural Forum due to a standing meeting at their village hall.

Street-lighting

It was noted that an email had been sent to a number of parish councils by the Senior Highway Contract Engineer for NCC seeking a response to a several questions regarding rural street-lighting. The meeting heard that the issue would briefly be discussed under the Agenda Item 9 - Fly-tipping.

15.RF.52 **BUDGET PROPOSALS 2016/17**

Mark Dickenson and Pina Patel attended the meeting and provided the forum with an overview of the budget setting process, the position with the 2015/16 budget, the budget for

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2016/17 and the preparation involved in the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

The meeting heard that the Draft Budget for 2016/17 had been presented to the Executive Committee at its meeting on 13th January, signalling the start of the consultation process. The draft budget would be considered by the Council's scrutiny committees, the Budget Consultation meeting and geographic forums, with questions and comments received as part of the process submitted to the Executive Committee on 17th February. A recommendation would then be made to Council for consideration and approval alongside the setting of 2016/17 Council Tax rates. This meeting had originally been scheduled for 24th February but had been moved to 1st March to allow for the county council budget setting.

The Council had utilised the budget delivery framework to identify £1.579m of savings to realise and set a balanced budget for 2015/16. All the identified savings were being successfully delivered.

The Draft Budget for 2016/17 had modelled a reduction in government grant of 15%, approximately £600k. Following the settlement announcement in December 2015, the provisional figure was a 16.5% reduction, approximately an additional £58k saving on top of budgeted figures. In total, it was estimated that a total of £1.522m of savings would be required for 2016/17. As in 2015/16, savings had been identified using the Council's budget delivery framework, with the largest saving identified as a result of lobbying, generating additional income and national policy change. Additional income would also be derived from an increase in Business Rates through pooling arrangements and growth within the Borough, New Homes Bonus, increased planning fees and increased rental income. A number of on-going savings had already been secured for 2016/17, with remaining savings identified and the Council was confident these would be delivered.

In the medium term, 2017/18 and beyond, assumptions had been made on future levels of government grant based on indicative figures provided as part of the settlement for 2016/17, although further clarification was required. Prior to considering Council Tax changes, year on year savings of over a million pounds were required.

Other pressures and risks included potential future changes to the New Homes Bonus scheme and the impact of the Business Rates Retention scheme. In addition, pressures around

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homelessness and the volatility of the recycling commodities market were also a factor. Growth remained a key driver and £2m had been set aside for capital investments.

The forum asked the following questions:-

| Item / Issue | Summary of Response Given |
|---|---|
| <p>How many of the efficiency savings came from savings and efficiencies and how many came from increasing prices paid by rate payers?</p> <p>(Cllr David Watson, Geddington, Newton and Little Oakley Parish Council)</p> | <p>Of savings identified, the Business Rates Retention Scheme generated approximately £500k as a result of additional growth in the Borough and Business Rates pooling. Approximately £180k came from the New Homes Bonus as an incentive from central government to develop more housing. Flexible Resourcing and a review of the Council's management structure comprised a further £350k. Increased planning fees comprised £110k as a result of increased volumes of planning applications; however those fees were set nationally. Contract negotiations and increased rental income accounted for another £130k and there were approximately £250k of smaller item savings.</p> <p>Officer Comment</p> |
| <p>How does the New Homes Bonus get spent by the Borough, is it spent on delivering increased resources that new homes generate or is it purely regarded as bottom line income? I would like to see NHB put back into the Borough for example as new council homes. It worries me you regard it as pure income.</p> <p>(Cllr Hilary Bull, Broughton)</p> | <p>The Executive had agreed a strategy a number of years ago as to how much of the New Homes Bonus would be included in the base budget, for 2016/17 this was around 54%, with the remaining balance allocated to the reserves, and had been seen at the time as a prudent approach. The New Homes Bonus had formed part of the Revenue Support Grant originally; central government had the grant and moved some of that</p> |

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| <p>Parish Council)</p> | <p>money to the New Homes Bonus, with those authorities delivering houses receiving grant money.</p> <p>Officer Comment</p> |
| <p>Consultation implies that you talk to people about options, what options are built into this budget? Are there any options you would like to consult on or his this consultation a fait accompli?</p> <p>(Cllr David Watson, Geddington, Newton and Little Oakley Parish Council)</p> | <p>KBC is in a different position to the County Council, we have a framework within which to deliver a budget, which we have delivered. We are not in a position of having to cut services; we have delivered a balanced budget and enabled services to be maintained.</p> <p>Officer Comment</p> |
| <p>In relation to the Business Rates Retention Scheme, we have £2.3m as a baseline figure; do we know what the baseline is with the new formula and whether we are worse off or not?</p> <p>(Cllr David Howes)</p> | <p>The Business Rates Retention Scheme has yet to be designed, so we cannot say whether we will be better or worse off. Historically when new schemes come in, Local Authorities are generally worse off so we are acting on the side of caution.</p> <p>Officer Comment</p> |
| <p>Why is there no increase in the KBC portion of Council Tax for 2016/17?</p> <p>(Cllr David Watson, Geddington, Newton and Little Oakley Parish Council)</p> | <p>Because we made a commitment in our manifesto not to increase Council Tax in the forthcoming financial year.</p> <p>(Cllr David Howes)</p> |
| <p>For most of the rural areas there is an increase (<i>in Council tax</i>) due to precepting. We are being penalised in rural areas, and KBC should have that noted in their budget.</p> <p>(Cllr Hilary Bull, Broughton Parish Council)</p> <p>Precepting was forced on us, we had our grant taken off us and</p> | <p>If parish councils did not exist there would be no precept. I am an advocate of parish councils in rural areas, but ultimately parish councils raise precepts.</p> <p>(Cllr David Howes)</p> |

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| <p>now we are forced to precept, I want that noted.</p> <p>(Cllr Robin Shrive, Broughton Parish Council)</p> | |
| <p>We have been shown a pie chart of how Council Tax is split between the Borough, County and the Police. Why is there no piece to represent Parish Council precepts? We are told this it is because the total is too small to feature in the chart. Perhaps next year it will be shown.</p> <p>(Cllr Nick Richards, Wilbarston Parish Council)</p> | <p>In the past we have typically shown the three main preceptors, but we can show this in future presentations going forward.</p> <p>Officer Comment</p> |
| <p>Can you assure us that although we precept, we are being forced to precept as services given to urban areas are being withdrawn from rural areas, so we have to precept to make up these services, this is a basic unfairness. If services the Borough gave throughout the district were the same, the precept would not have to be so great within villages. There is a perception that because services are withdrawn from rural areas, they have to make up for those by precepting more.</p> <p>(Cllr Rosalind Willatts, Wilbarston Parish Council)</p> | <p>There are no increases to Council Tax, cuts to frontline services or cuts to voluntary sector funding within the budget, any services we provide in rural area will continue. This is covered in paragraph 2.15 of the covering report.</p> <p>Officer Comment</p> |

15.RF.53

COMMUNITY GRANTS SCHEME

Carole Stephenson, Community Partnerships Manager, attended the meeting and provided details of the ongoing Community Grants Scheme.

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4.2.16

The meeting noted that despite financial pressures, vital funding had been provided to community organisations across the Borough. Three grant schemes were available to organisations as set out below:-

- Capital Hall Grants – up to £5000
- Community Fund – up to £2500
- Small Grants – up to £500

A breakdown of grants awarded during 2014/15 was provided to the meeting, outlining the projects that had been applied for and received grants.

The meeting noted that a booklet detailing the application process, award criteria and the forms of documentation required in the application process was available to download from the Council website, along with two case studies of successful applications.

The forum heard that the intention was to run the scheme again in 2016/17, with applications being considered from 1st April, although they could be submitted prior to that date. It was anticipated that the closing date for applications would be around June, although the forum noted that the 2014/15 Capital Hall Grant deadline had previously been extended to November to allow for additional bids to come forward.

Cllr Howes stated that he would advocate an increase in the existing £40k fund, although no timescales could be provided for this at the current time given budgetary pressures.

The forum were advised that the only applications rejected to date were one's where the project was not in a position to advance, or where the match-funding for the project was not available.

15.RF.54 FLY-TIPPING AND STREET-LIGHTING

Brendan Coleman, Head of Environmental Care attended the meeting to provide information on fly-tipping issues in the Borough, as requested at the previous forum meeting.

Statistics were supplied covering fly-tips in the Borough for the previous six months, with the meeting noting that the majority of

occurrences were cleared within a single-working day. KBC was attempting to undertake new methods of combating the problem and had convened a Fly-tipping Task Group, utilising intelligence-led data to target enforcement action. Complaints were now mapped, to link instances of fly-tipping with specific locations and types of waste dumped. Work was underway with businesses and specific sections of the community regarding waste disposal in an attempt to tackle the root cause of fly-tipping and reduce the likelihood of reoccurrence.

A request was made that parishes continued to report instances of fly-tipping as they arose so swift clearance could be made to prevent additional build-up of waste. There were one or two sites that were beginning to emerge as regular dumping locations and it was important to concentrate enforcement resources on these locations.

The meeting heard that KBC were looking to enhance the working relationship with parishes in relation to the issue of fly-tipping. Advice or assistance in combatting rural fly-tipping could be sought by parishes in addition to clearance.

The forum asked questions surrounding fly-tipping on private land, the involvement of the Environment Agency and investigating cross-border fly-tipping.

The forum requested that their thanks be noted and conveyed to Brendan and his team for their services in clearing fly-tipping swiftly and efficiently whenever reports had been made.

DJP

Street-lighting

Brendan advised the forum that he was aware of the enquiries made by NCC regarding street-lighting (see 15.RF.51) and KBC were having ongoing meetings with the county council in relation to the issue. He reassured the forum that funding that KBC had previously put towards rural lighting would continue to be available for 2016/17, but there remained historical issues to be resolved. At an appropriate point, further information would be brought back to the forum.

BC

It was reported that a private finance initiative in conjunction with NCC for lamp replacement was due to finish in September, so swift action was required if parishes wished to take advantage of that funding.

It was noted that Warkton Parish Council had issues relating to a Rural Forum No. 8

specific light within the parish and conversation had been ongoing for a considerable period of time with KBC's Jim McInally. Brendan noted that he was happy to examine this issue away from the meeting and provide direct feedback. It was also noted that Michael Chester would be assuming rural lighting responsibilities in future.

15.RF.55 **IMPROVED COMMUNICATION CHANNELS**

Lisa Hyde, Assistance Chief Executive raised the matter of communication between parishes and KBC and the possibility of working together to improve matters.

The forum noted that quarterly meetings occasionally resulted in issues arising in the gaps between meetings that may require rural comment or involvement. An example was provided regarding the consultation process in relation to the potential Kettering court closures, which could have benefitted from rural involvement.

It was noted that there was now a position of Parish Liaison Officer who served as a conduit for parish contacts at KBC. There was an aim to provide information and responses to queries that were pertinent to all rural areas.

It was suggested that a working group, consisting of four or five forum members work with Lisa to develop ideas to improve communications between parishes and KBC. Any suggestions could be brought to a future meeting of the forum. Forum members were encouraged to consider the idea, with an email to be sent to parishes to determine levels of interest.

Cllr Hilary Bull welcomed the idea and volunteered to be one of the working group members.

15.RF.56 **POLICE STATISTICS**

The Police Statistics supplied as Item 11 were noted.

15.RF.57 **FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

The following items were noted for future meetings of the Forum:-

Rural Forum No. 9

- Police Statistics (June)
- Truck Stops (June)
- Feedback from CSS Inspectors' Visit (June)
- Rural Diversification Business Growth
- Sheep Street Junction Remodelling
- Improved Communication Channels
- Street-lighting

Further details were provided regarding the inclusion of an item on truck stops for the next meeting. It was noted that NCC had a truck stop policy and an invitation would be extended to the responsible officer to attend the next meeting in June.

Chair

15.RF.46

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

An issue was raised regarding the Kettering Traffic Management Plan and whether there were any regulations developers must adhere to regarding movement of construction traffic following an incident involving a construction vehicle in Warkton.

LH

Jane Calcott from Churches Together reported a series of break-ins at churches in Kettering and advised that rural churches may wish to adopt a more security conscious approach.

In response to a question relating to the Joint Gypsy and Traveller Community Group, Cllr David Howes informed the meeting that he would bring any relevant information back to a future forum.

Cllr Chris Groome raised an issue of potential future charges levied by KBC on town and parish councils for the conducting of bye-elections.

Cllr David Watson raised the issue of whether parish clerks and councillors attending the council offices should pay for parking, noting that a deal had been reached for blood donors parking charges. Although this comment was not raised within the budget section of the meeting, it was felt appropriate to include it within the budget consultation feedback.

15.RF.47

DATE AND LOCATION OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Forum would be held on 23rd June 2016. An offer was made by Wilbarston Parish Council to host the meeting.

(The meeting started at 7.00pm and ended at 9:00pm)

Signed

Chair

DJP

DRAFT