

**BOROUGH OF KETTERING**  
**RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

**Meeting held: 6<sup>th</sup> December 2016**

**Present:** Councillor Duncan Bain (Chair)  
Councillors Jim Hakewill and Jenny Henson

**Also Present:** Martin Hammond (Deputy Chief Executive)  
Carly Hohn (Housing)  
David Pope (Committee Administrator)

**16.RD.20 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Greg Titcombe.

**16.RD.21 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Research and Development Committee held on 27<sup>th</sup> October 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**16.RD.22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None

**16.RD.23 HOMELESSNESS UPDATE (A1)**

Carly Hohn, Housing Solutions Manager attended the meeting and provided the committee with a presentation outlining the current position of homelessness in the Borough and detailed works being undertaken to mitigate the impact of an increase in homeless applications.

The committee heard that a significant rise in statutory homeless applications was well documented and been noticeable since August

2015, with a 90% overall increase in applications in 2015/16 compared to the previous financial year.

The majority of customers presenting as homeless had been made homeless from the private rented sector, accounting for over half of all applications in 2015/16 up from just a quarter in the previous year. Details of the priority need criteria were provided which, if met in full, required KBC to accept full statutory duty for applicants. These criteria included having dependent children, being vulnerable and having not caused their own homelessness.

It was noted that the majority of the increase in applications comprised families with dependent children. In 2015/16, 81 households had been accepted with 149 children, a significant rise from the 22 households with 42 children in 2014/15. In addition, larger family units were now presenting as homeless, with 13 families with more than four children currently resident in temporary accommodation.

Members noted that the impacts of Welfare Reform and the benefit cap combined with the rise in private sector rents had made housing increasingly unaffordable for a large number of people. In line with a rise in homelessness applications, there had been increased use of temporary accommodation to house applicants. People were also staying in temporary accommodation for longer as KBC had to discharge its duty through an offer of long term suitable affordable accommodation for the households. In the private sector, discrepancies between rents charged and the Local Housing Allowance meant that this discharge was becoming more difficult. In the social sector, fewer properties were becoming available on Keyways, especially larger family properties.

Members asked questions regarding households being placed into temporary accommodation outside the borough due to a lack of suitable accommodation. It was noted that there was a small number of households in temporary accommodation within the borough who originated from other areas. It was heard that the main reason for this situation was households fleeing domestic violence. Placing households in accommodation outside the borough was usually undertaken for as short a time as possible in order to minimise any disruption to employment, schooling and social interactions. If there were dependent children in education and placed households lacked transport, arrangements could be made for children to be transported back to the borough to attend school. KBC officers kept in contact with all out of borough households in temporary accommodation.

It was heard that the number of new build completions was increasing, with 194 in the year to date. These were mainly being delivered through S106 sites, although the build rate was below

what needed to be provided as part of the Strategic Market Housing Assessment. The meeting noted that there was an issue over the viability of future schemes, with developers not always providing the most appropriate length of tenure or property mix.

The committee also received an update on rough sleepers, who were often individuals that KBC did not have a statutory duty towards, although efforts were made to engage and provide assistance with individuals. KBC was required to provide an indication of the number of rough sleepers in the borough on an annual basis, with a full count undertaken on the night of 11<sup>th</sup> November between 12am-3am. A number of council officers and volunteers had searched the borough looking for rough sleepers based on existing intelligence. A total of three rough sleepers were identified on the night, although it was strongly believed that there were a further three individuals, but they could not be approached. A coordinated approach to rough sleepers would be taken alongside partner agencies and the council remained aware of its Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEPP) duty.

It was heard that the council was exploring new ways of delivering affordable homes for rent as well as reviewing temporary accommodation provision to reduce the need for more expensive paid accommodation. Although the council had become increasingly reactive in the current climate, there was a need to remain focussed on homelessness prevention, with a new Homeless Forum created and Homeless Trailblazers funding sought.

Questions were asked in relation to temporary accommodation provision at Wellington House and the anticipated overspend on the homelessness budget.

#### **16.MA.24 YOUTH ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY (A2)**

The committee received a report which sought approval of the final report and conclusions of the Youth Engagement Task and Finish Group.

The Youth Engagement Task and Finish Group had been established by the Research and Development Committee following a successful motion at Council in April 2016 to explore ways in which the council could better engage with, listen to and inform young people in the Borough. The Task and Finish Group had met six times between July and October to consider its approach, survey the council's current activities, take evidence from individuals and groups, and to formulate the final report. This report had been circulated to all evidence providers for comment and no adverse responses had been received.

The conclusions contained within the final report were summarised as follows:-

1. Project Based Initiatives – Involving young people in the practical design and delivery of projects affecting them directly
2. Consultation Forums – Utilising existing school councils and bodies organised by other institutions to provide a wide range of involvement. Meetings arranged between members of these organisations during the year and a possible annual conference
3. Social Media – Schools were happy to allow KBC to use their own closed systems to get messages across. Utilising existing systems and contacts rather than trying to invent something new.
4. Topic Based Information Provision – A recent session on homelessness held at Buccleuch Academy had been very well received and similar events could be held in future
5. Engagement with Civic Leadership – There was an opportunity for reinvigoration of the Mayor's Cadet position and the appointment of a member of the cabinet as a Young Persons Champion. Engagement through the Highlights Magazine and widening its reach alongside marketing of KBC services such as Kettering Borough Training.

The committee heard that their recommendations would be provided verbally to the Executive Committee that was due to meet on 7<sup>th</sup> December.

**RESOLVED** that the Research and Development Committee recommended approval of the Youth Engagement Task and Finish group final report to the Executive Committee.

## **16.MA.25 WORK PROGRAMME (A3)**

The work programme was submitted to the Committee for consideration. The following reports would be brought to the next Committee:-

- Local Pollinator Strategy Task and Finish Group
- Budget Proposals for 2017/18

Members noted that there were a number of motions set to be taken to Council on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2016 that could require scrutiny involvement should they be carried.

*(The meeting started at 7.00pm and ended at 8.00pm)*

Signed: .....

(Chair)

DJP