

BOROUGH OF KETTERING

KETTERING TOWN FORUM

Meeting held: 30th January 2017

Present: **Kettering Borough Councillors**

Councillor Lloyd Bunday (Chair)
Councillor Linda Adams
Councillor Duncan Bain
Councillor James Burton
Councillor Ashley Davies
Councillor Anne Lee
Councillor Clark Mitchell
Councillor Mick Scrimshaw
Councillor Lesley Thurland
Councillor Greg Titcombe
Councillor Keli Watts
Councillor Michael Tebbutt

Northamptonshire County Councillors

Councillor Eileen Hales MBE
Councillor Bill Parker

Representatives of Member Organisations

Shawn Marshall – (Northamptonshire Police)
Lesley McCormack – (St Peters & St Paul Parish Church)
Paul Ansell – (Kettering Civic Society)
Jane Calcott – (Churches Together in Kettering District)

Also Present

Shirley Plenderleith (Kettering Borough Council)
Guy Holloway (Kettering Borough Council)
John Conway (Kettering Borough Council)
Mark Dickenson (Kettering Borough Council)
Jo Haines (Kettering Borough Council)
Carly Hohn (Kettering Borough Council)
Callum Galluzzo (Forum Administrator)
David Pope (Forum Administrator)

16.KTF.36 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Maggie Don, Jenny Henson, Phillip Hollobone, Ian Jelley, Shirley Lynch, Mary Malin and Jonathan West.

16.KTF.37 MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Kettering Town Forum held on 28th November 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair

16.KTF.26– Apologies were also received from Councillor Titcombe.

16.KTF.38 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor James Burton declared an interest in item 8 due to his role as a market trader and item 8 due to his position as Portfolio Holder for Housing.

16.KTF.39 REPRESENTATIVE ON THE A6 TOWNS FORUM

There were no volunteers to be the Kettering Town Forum representative on the A6 Towns Forum.

16.KTF.40 POLICING ISSUES AND STATISTICS

Temporary Sergeant Shawn Marshall gave an update on the latest crime statistics for Kettering. The forum heard there had been an additional 170 burglary offences this year compared to previous years and also an increase in robbery.

Retail crime including shoplifting had risen over the previous 12 months with an additional 284 incidents being reported. This saw an increase of 61.61% on the previous 12 months. Members of the forum heard that additional reporting techniques had been undertaken following the relaunch of the Kettering Retail Crime Initiative.

The Civic Society enquired about techniques and methods of improving community involvement in the wider community due to

the town's ethical diversity. It was noted that Community Engagement Officers were currently involved in all areas of the town and would be willing to advise on any issues.

Members requested that the statistics given by the police be broken down into wards as they were previously. Members also requested that that more work be done regarding the drug issues within surrounding properties around Wellington Street. Sergeant Marshall advised members that he was aware of the issues surrounding a specific property and neighbouring areas and a number of operations were in hand to help tackle this problem.

16.KTF.41 BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2017/18 & MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN

Group Accountant Jo Haines attended the meeting and gave an overview on the budget proposals for the next financial year as well as the council's Medium Term Financial Plan.

Members of the forum heard the Executive Committee had started the formal consultation period for the budget on the 18th January, and that the public budget consultation was held in the previous week. Members also heard that the views of the Geographic Forums were sought during the consultation period which ran from 18th January to the 1st March 2017 when the budget was formally considered by Full Council and Council Tax levels set.

Members of the forum were informed that that during the financial year 2016/17, the Council's Budget Delivery Framework had helped to deliver £1.5 million in savings. On top of this the forum heard that central government's core grant to the council for the financial year 2017/18 had been reduced by £568,000 or 16.3% although this reduction was in line with expectations and presented a continued challenge for 2017/18.

It was reported that savings of £1.38 million had been identified for 2017/18 using the Council's Budget Delivery Framework.

Members then heard that the majority of these savings would be achieved through staff suggestions and innovative working, but officers had also looked to an increase in New Homes Bonus as well as through commercial investment, an increase in business rates and service growth.

It was reported to the forum that over the previous six years council tax had been frozen. However, there was no longer any incentive provided by the government for local councils for freezing council tax rates.

Members of the forum asked the following questions in relation to the draft budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Item / Issue	Summary of Response Given
<p>At the public consultation meeting a question was raised about the £150,000 saving in the corporate management line by not filling vacant posts immediately. How is that calculated? Presumably you do not know who may leave their post or which posts will become vacant, with some needing to be filled on a temporary basis until the post is recruited to.</p>	<p>£150,000 broadly reflects 1% of establishment staffing budget. Turnover of staff is examined and each vacant post is looked at in turn before a decision is made as to whether to fill it. This provides an opportunity to see how a service can be provided going forward.</p>
<p>It would be useful to have a breakdown of fees and charges that are to increase. Some shops have learned that their rent will double. If rents go up that much, businesses may not be attracted or be able to afford to stay.</p>	<p>When we look to review charges for industrial and commercial premises, we monitor market rents to ensure we are achieving those and as such this fulfils part of the council's commercial strategy.</p>
<p>Commercial premises are not recycling to the level of residential properties; there could be potential income there, why are they treated differently to residents?</p>	<p>KBC have a statutory obligation to provide receptacles and collect on a frequency, Waste and recycling from residential properties. KBC only have to offer a commercial service and we have no power to force parties to recycle.</p> <p>KBC offer a Commercial Waste Collection service which includes a full recycling service. The Council actively promotes waste minimisation and encourages the reduction and re-use of materials, where possible prior to disposal</p> <p>All commercial customers are encouraged to recycle and as an incentive recycling collections are offered at a reduced rate.</p> <p>Due to external competitors we do not service all businesses within the borough and therefore although we actively encourage recycling we do not have any legislative powers to insist that all premises recycle, however recycling commercial waste is more cost effective for businesses and will contribute to sustaining a greener environment</p>
<p>Do we state things clearly enough</p>	<p>We do our best and put across to</p>

<p>so people can engage with the consultation on the budget, so residents understand what is going to happen in next twelve months? Are we consulting in meaningful way with the public?</p>	<p>the public where budgets have changed. This year we offered explanations where budgets had changed by a variance of more than £10,000. At the budget consultation meeting we provided the context as to where savings had come from. We have a balanced budget and have not cut frontline services or funding for the voluntary sector. We will take these comments away to see whether we can communicate more easily with less detail.</p>
<p>When you are thinking about Business Rates and setting these, to what extent is consideration given to how to attract different retailers and businesses increasing diversity in the town?</p>	<p>The government have come forward with initiatives linked to small business rate relief, but rates are predominantly determined by the Valuation Office.</p>

16.KTF.42 STRENGTHENING TOWN CENTRE ENGAGEMENT

The forum received a report consulting members on proposals to amalgamate Kettering Town Centre Taskforce with the Kettering Town Forum.

Members heard that the purpose of the Town Centre Taskforce was to encourage and strengthen engagement with town centre businesses. The Taskforce’s vision was to form a partnership of key partners to support the delivery of projects aimed at improving the performance of the town centre.

Members of the forum heard that these projects included:

- Purple Flag & Night time Economy including the reduction of ASB in the town centre
- Supporting the Street Pastors Project
- Promotion of the town centre

Members agreed that there lacked representatives from town centre businesses at both the Town Centre Taskforce and Kettering Town Forum.

Members also agreed that a wider business community engagement approach was needed for the forum to encourage representation at the Kettering Town Forum; this could include the voluntary sector/charities.

RESOLVED That the Kettering Town Centre Taskforce be amalgamated with the Kettering Town Forum

initially on a trial basis with feedback sought in the future.

16.KTF.43 HOMELESSNESS UPDATE

Head of Housing John Conway and Housing Solutions Manager Carly Hohn attended the meeting and gave a presentation on the homelessness situation in Kettering.

Members of the forum heard homelessness was a growing issue within the borough. Homelessness applications had increased, with over 250 received in the year ending 2016 compared to 186 in 2015 and 158 in 2014.

The forum heard that there were around 40 households every week that contacted the council for advice regarding homelessness and that there had been an increase in applications from families with dependent children.

In the year 2014/15, 22 households with 42 children had applied as statutorily homeless, whereas in the year 2015/16, 81 households with 149 children had applied.

The forum heard that there were a number of reasons that had led to a soaring demand for social housing including:

- Growing population and changing demographics
- Unaffordable home ownership
- Not enough newly built homes
- Rising private rents
- Impact of Welfare Reform for people on benefits and low incomes
- Cuts in funding for supported housing

Members of the forum heard that to keep up with demand, the borough needed to deliver 230 affordable homes each year. In 2014/15 just 103 had been built.

A total of 211 homelessness applications had been received since April 2016, with 76 households currently living in temporary accommodation.

The forum heard that the council operates a Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) whereby rough sleepers are housed temporarily should the temperature fall below zero degrees for three consecutive days. A total of 10 rough sleepers had been assisted during recent periods of extreme weather, so far this winter.

Members requested notification whenever SWEP regulations were due to come into force.

The Forum also heard that the council works closely with the Home Group who operate the Wellington House Hostel for homeless people. This provides accommodation for 21 single people and couples. A new night shelter operated by Open Door Church was also due to being operational shortly.

16.KTF.44 SUGGESTED FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Items suggested for future meetings of the forum were:-

- Paving issues within the Town Centre
- Environmental Care – Commercial Recycling/Fly-tipping

(The meeting started at 7.00 pm and ended at 8.52 pm)

Signed.....
Chair

CG