

BOROUGH OF KETTERING

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Meeting held: 26th September 2017

Present: Councillor Duncan Bain (Chair)

Councillors Cedwien Brown, Michael Brown, Jim Hakewill,
Jenny Henson, Mick Scrimshaw and Greg Titcombe

Also Present: Martin Hammond (Executive Director)
Shirley Plenderleith (Head of Public Services)
John Conway (Head of Housing)
Beth Gordon (Operations Manager)
David Pope (Committee Administrator)

17.RD.09 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Jenny Henson. It was noted that Cllr Mike Tebbutt was acting as substitute for Cllr Henson.

17.RD.10 MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Research and Development Committee held on 21st June 2017 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

17.RD.11 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

17.RD.12 INTERIM REVIEW OF SPORTS FACILITIES STRATEGY ACTION PLAN 2011-2021 (A1)

The Head of Public Services presented a report to the committee which outlined the purpose of the Sports Facilities Strategy and associated action plan and asked members to note the planned full review of the strategy in summer 2018.

It was noted that the strategic strategy set out the need for sporting

facilities in and around the Borough, with the action plan tracking progress of the strategy. It was heard that when introduced in 2011, there had been an understanding that both the strategy and action plan would require periodic reviews to ensure they continued to be fit for purpose.

Members made the following comments in relation to the action plan and the scope of the coming review:-

- One element of the action plan (appx 1 – paragraph 2.4) was the development of a type 3 rugby facility for Kettering Rugby Club with at least a 25 year lease. It was requested that a similar ambition be added to accommodate Kettering Town Football Club.
- That mention be made of the possibility of a new swimming capacity for the Borough as an outcome of the Swimming Pool Task and Finish Group (appx 1 - paragraph 2.5)
- Well Lane Community Centre required an extension due to lack of storage space
- Whether there would be potential for a multi-sports facility, possibly as an addition to any new swimming pool that could covers sports such as judo and gymnastics
- All facility owners should be encouraged to seek external funding, not just village halls
- Rothwell Corinthians FC was not mentioned as part of the action plan
- Desborough Leisure Centre Phase 2 was included as part of Desborough North S106 and needed to be built sooner rather than later and include squash facilities
- Desborough Cricket Club was not mentioned within the action plan despite being very active
- Desborough Town Juniors FC was not mentioned within the action plan, Appendix 2

Members considered that there was a need to examine the number of participants and clubs for each sport, how available facilities were marketed and to determine who had responsibility for facility management.

It was further noted that discussions were underway with Desborough Town Council in relation to identifying an alternative site for tennis courts within the town.

RESOLVED

That Members noted the report and the planned full review of the Sports Facilities Strategy in summer 2018, and that the observations above be addressed within the forthcoming review.

17.RD.13 PROVISION OF NEW COUNCIL HOUSING (A2)

The Committee was presented with a report which set out the Council's plans for developing new council housing and outlined the main challenges facing local authorities wishing to build new homes.

It was noted that the housing needs of the nation had not been met for a number of years and had only been achieved in the past due to mass construction undertaken by local authorities, such programmes having been wound down in the early 1980's. Housing Associations had increasingly become the main provider of affordable housing, but housing needs were still not being met.

It was heard that in 2012, Housing Revenue Account Self-Financing had been introduced with an aim of providing additional flexibility in regard to how housing revenue was spent, allowing authorities to plan how they wished to deliver housing and manage their housing stock. However, this had not worked in practice due to ongoing changes to government policy. The recent governmental Housing White Paper had been published with a view to providing local authorities with a greater role in housing delivery; however a number of restrictions to building remained in place.

The council was the largest housing stock holder in the Borough and over the previous 35 years had worked alongside housing associations to build new affordable housing, with over 2000 units constructed during this time. In addition the Council had recently worked alongside a housing developer to build five new council houses at Laburnum Crescent. This process had provided a useful learning experience that could be utilised as part of proposed developments at Scott Road and Albert Street, both of which had been approved by the Executive Committee at its meeting on 20th September.

The main barriers to the delivery of council housing were outlined to the meeting including:-

- Four year 1% rent reduction ongoing to 2020;
- Existing housing stock being one-third pre-war and requiring significant investment to remain viable;
- Right to Buy (RTB) which resulted in loss of housing stock, and the Council being unable to retain 100% of RTB receipts or combine those with other subsidies to build replacement stock;
- The HRA debt cap severely limited the Council's borrowing capacity

The Council had examined the delivery of additional housing via a Housing Company, but would not be pursuing this as an option at the current time.

Members asked questions in relation to Housing Companies and requested that a more detailed report be prepared on the topic for submission to a future meeting of the Committee. It was proposed and agreed that a task and finish group might be an appropriate means of understanding the options in developing a housing company, at the right time.

Questions were also asked in relation to:-

- The Right to Buy scheme
- The potential use of temporary structures or mobile homes for those accepted as statutory homeless
- The feasibility of utilising land or space on existing council housing stock in rural areas
- The undertaking of a Task and Finish Group to examine best practice in relation to building new housing stock
- Disabled adaption of the proposed bungalows at Albert Road

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED

That the report be noted and that a Task and Finish Group be established to consider options for the work that a housing development company would undertake, once initial work had been completed on the purpose of such a development vehicle

17.RD.14 COMMUNITY TOILET SCHEME (A3)

At the request of the Committee at its meeting in June, a report was tabled providing an update on the Community Toilet Scheme in relation to the availability of disabled facilities and work undertaken to promote the scheme in the intervening period.

In relation to promotion of the scheme, it was heard that all current members of the scheme had been visited and new scheme signage provided. The scheme itself had been promoted through the new This is Kettering website and the Council's Customer Service and Environmental Health teams. Discussions were underway with an additional two businesses that were keen on becoming members of the scheme. As soon as this had been achieved a press release would be issued that would build on the existing publicity of the scheme.

In regard to disabled facilities it was noted that six members of the scheme offered disabled toilet facilities, two under the Radar Key scheme. It was heard that The Shop in the town centre offered additional space and equipment for those unable to access a

standard disabled toilet. Negotiations were underway to have The Shop join the Community Toilet scheme.

Members made comments in relation to extending the scheme to the A6 Towns, with it being noted that Rothwell Town Council had taken the decision to close its town centre toilet facilities due to misuse.

It was suggested that incentivising the scheme by advertising member's businesses via the Council's various social media platforms could encourage more businesses to join the scheme.

It was

RESOLVED that the Committee noted the progress on the scheme and the additional publicity work undertaken

17.RD.15 WORK PROGRAMME (A4)

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

- Planning Enforcement Policy
- Using Housing Companies to Deliver New Housing in the Borough Task and Finish Group
- Electric Car Charging Points in the Borough

(The meeting started at 7.00pm and ended at 8.32pm)

Signed:

(Chair)

DJP