

BOROUGH OF KETTERING

A6 TOWNS FORUM

Meeting held: 31st January 2018

Present: Councillor John Currall (KBC/RTC) - Chair
Councillor Ruth Groome (KBC/BLTC)
Councillor Andrew Dutton (KBC)
Councillor June Derbyshire (KBC)
Councillor Christopher Groome (BLTC)
Councillor James Hakewill (NCC)
Councillor Chris Smith-Haynes (NCC)
Councillor Jenny Davies (BLTC)
Councillor Mark Cox (RTC)
Councillor Robin Carter (BSPC)
Councillor Mike Tebbutt (KBC/DTC)
Councillor Karl Sumpter (KBC/TRC)
Councillor Carolyn Carter (BSPC)
Councillor Dianne Miles-Zanger (BSPC)
Councillor David Soans (KBC/DTC)
Councillor Allan Matthews (NCC/DTC)
Councillor Margaret Talbot (KBC/RTC)
Councillor Lesley Thurland

Also Present: Julie Trahern (Kettering Borough Council)
Mark Dickenson (Kettering Borough Council)
Dean Mitchell (Kettering Borough Council)
Insp Julie Mead (Northamptonshire Police)
Sgt Robert Offord (Northamptonshire Police)
Amy Nimmo (Committee Administrator – KBC)

17.A6TF.24 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Ian Jelley (KBC), Councillor Mark Dearing (KBC), Councillor Cedwien Brown (KBC), Councillor Ray Davies (RTC).

17.A6TF.25 MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the A6 Towns Forum held on 29th November 2017 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair

17.A6TF.26 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

17.A6TF.27 POLICE STATISTICS

Sergeant Robert Offord gave a presentation showing members of the forum how to use www.police.uk to find more accurate crime statistics for their areas. The forum was also reminded of the Neighbourhood Alert system which provided a wealth of user-defined information available via a variety of media. It was heard that 2,500 people had signed up to receive alerts from the system by using the following website www.northamptonshireneighbourhoodalert.co.uk

17.A6TF.28 DRAFT BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2017/18 AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

The Head of Finance attended the meeting and provided the forum with an overview of the budget setting process, the position with the 2017/18 budget, the budget for 2018/19 and the preparation involved in the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

The meeting heard that the Draft Budget for 2018/19 had been presented to the Executive Committee at its meeting on 17th 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 14th February. A recommendation would then be made to Council for consideration and approval alongside the setting of 2018/19 Council Tax rates at its meeting on 28th February.

The Council had utilised the budget delivery framework to identify £1.38m of savings to realise and set a balanced budget for 2017/18. All the identified savings were being successfully delivered.

The Draft Budget for 2018/19 included a provisional reduction in central government grant of £304,000 (10.5%), broadly in line with what had been modelled. In total, it was estimated that £1.473m of savings would be required to achieve a balanced budget for 2018/19. As in 2017/18, savings had been identified using the Council's budget delivery framework. The major areas for savings were as follows:-

- £578,000 - Lobbying and growth, New Homes Bonus and planning fees

- £139,000 – Staff Innovation
- £143,000 – Increases in fees and charges

When considering Council Tax for 2018/19 and going forward, members needed to seriously consider what represented a sustainable strategy. Council tax levels had been frozen by KBC for the previous seven years, although there was no longer any government incentive to continue this policy. Prior to considering changes to Council Tax levels, KBC would be required to make average savings of over £1 million a year up to 2022/23, in addition to the £11 million of savings achieved since 2010. It was noted that KBC had closed this gap without increasing Council Tax, cutting frontline services or voluntary sector funding.

It was heard that levels of uncertainty and reductions in funding were significant. Government was consulting on a Fair Funding formula that would determine future grant levels for local government and the potential impact of this review should not be underestimated.

It was noted that changes were also anticipated to the Business Rates Retention Scheme, whereby the local share would increase from 50% to 75% by 2020/21, although there remained a strong possibility that less growth would be retained locally. This was considered to be a major risk and the council continued to be involved in lobbying. Another area of uncertainty was the possible change to the New Homes Bonus baseline which could result in less NHB funding in future.

Details were provided with details of the Capital Programme budget for 2018/19 and the Housing Revenue Account which remained on target to be delivered within budget. The Tenants' Forum would at its February meeting make a recommendation to the Executive Committee in regard to rent setting, although the draft budget assumed a 1% rent reduction as required by the government.

In summary, the savings identified as part of the budget for 2017/18 were on course to be delivered and savings had been identified in full for 2018/19. The medium term was much more uncertain as government changes could seriously impact any funding received.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance attended the meeting and thanked the team involved in preparing the budget for their hard work in delivering a balanced draft budget. Cllr Thurland also detailed the pressures

involved in maintaining and delivering the council budget on an annual basis.

The forum asked the following questions:-

Item / Issue	Summary of Response Given
<p>You are claiming eight unprecedented years of no Council Tax increases; this is not true for every member of the community with payments increasing from 20% to 45% for those on such low incomes they qualify for Council Tax Support. How do you think the poorer members of the community feel knowing they are the only ones to pay this increase?</p> <p>(Cllr Chris Smith-Haynes – NCC)</p>	<p>This was frozen two years ago and has been frozen for another two years. We have hardship funds available.</p> <p>(Cllr Lesley Thurland – Finance Portfolio Holder)</p>
Item / Issue	Summary of Response Given
<p>The next lowest Council Tax support in the county is 30% with other areas being 5%. Has this impacted on homelessness figures?</p> <p>Northamptonshire County Council only froze Council Tax for three years, eight years is ridiculous. Retaining Council Tax at that level is absolutely crazy. Throughout the report officers recommend to raise Council Tax but this is a political issue. KPMG state that financial pressures are likely to increase. The Government assumes 3% rise and by not doing this we have forgone nearly £1 million of revenue.</p> <p>Car Parking charges have not risen since 2011. Council Tax revenue is being taken to subsidise car parking.</p>	<p>Our collection rates are some of the best around and we have an award winning Inclusion Team.</p> <p>(Cllr Lesley Thurland – Finance Portfolio Holder)</p> <p>There are a number of factors which contribute to homelessness. Direct correlation would be hard to prove. Our levels of homelessness are similar to other authorities.</p> <p>(Officer response)</p> <p>Kettering Borough Council and Northamptonshire County Council have had different strategies.</p> <p>(Cllr Lesley Thurland – Finance Portfolio Holder)</p>

<p>Northamptonshire County Council has a balanced budget and will balance this year but they have raised Council Tax.</p> <p>(Cllr Jim Hakewill)</p>	
<p>Homelessness in the borough has grown enormously which is going to involve more expense. It is worrying that it is working families going through hard times. I hope KBC can keep on top of this and make sure resources are available for more vulnerable people in the society.</p> <p>(Cllr Andrew Dutton)</p>	<p>This is dealt with by our frontline services. We continue to look at preventative and innovative ways to manage this service.</p> <p>(Cllr Lesley Thurland – Finance Portfolio Holder)</p>
Item / Issue	Summary of Response Given
<p>The biggest problem in the budget is the Homelessness heading. Net expenditure £444,000 now £745,000 then back down to £495,000. The 2018/19 draft budget anticipates further preventative measures will reduce the cost but this is a big gap and homelessness is on the increase. We need an explanation of what will be happening.</p> <p>£100,000 is only a small part of the story. I do not believe it will come in at that level.</p> <p>(Councillor Chris Groome – Burton Latimer Town Council)</p>	<p>The 2018/19 budget includes a grant of £100,000 from the Government due to increases in pressures in this area.</p> <p>(Officer response)</p> <p>Bed and Breakfasts are costly and we are looking to take individuals and families away from this. It would reduce cost and provide a better environment.</p> <p>(Cllr Lesley Thurland – Finance Portfolio Holder)</p> <p>We will closely monitor this</p> <p>(Officer response)</p>
<p>Where is the New Homes Bonus included in the budget? A bonus should never be relied upon, originally to be taken on top of the budget. Can we have a separate line to reflect the New Homes Bonus?</p>	<p>This is shown in line 1 of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.</p> <p>(Officer response)</p>

<p>KBC are predicting £600,000 in rent effectively from the Capital Programme? Are commercial investments included?</p> <p>CIPFA are concerned about Local Government buying commercial buildings.</p>	<p>The base budget for Commercial Income for 2017/18 was £285,000 additional income of £600,000 has been included in the 2018/19 draft budget.</p> <p>A number of projects have been delivered and a number are currently live. It was agreed at the last Executive Committee to bring forward some of the capital budget to deliver these projects. The vast proportion are due to be delivered this financial year and around 25% will need to be delivered next year.</p> <p>There have been changes in government guidance for investments including purchasing commercial buildings but our policy does not currently require any further changes to be made.</p> <p><i>(Officer response)</i></p> <p>At the LGA meeting, the feeling was that the Government needs to let councils get on with commercial investments.</p> <p><i>(Cllr Lesley Thurland – Finance Portfolio Holder)</i></p>
Item / Issue	Summary of Response Given
<p>Will Business Rates be going up? (Local business owner)</p>	<p>50-75% looks at growth generated from Business Rates retention but does not affect the amount of business rates that is charged.</p> <p><i>(Officer comment)</i></p>

17.A6TF.29 INFORMATION ITEMS

Newsround

Rothwell

The Rothwell Town Partnership were offering to contribute £100 towards the cost of performing in the Market Square in Rothwell in the coming summer months.

Burton Latimer

The Burton Latimer Baptist Church pantomime, Dick Wittington would be running from 15th – 17th February

Desborough

It was noted that the pedestrian crossing near the library had been installed as part of the Desborough precept and the plans for the one-way bus route were moving along.

Feedback from other Forums

None

17.A6TF.30 ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

- Update on Council garages
- Allotments
- Road surfacing for the coming year
- Update on dog fouling
- Park Watch
- Future plans for play and outdoor gym equipment
- Update on parking throughout the borough
- Update on clinical commissioning primary care
- What is Unitary Authority status - Report

17.A6TF.22 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None

17.A6TF.23 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would take place on 27th June 2018

(The meeting started at 7.00 pm and ended at 8.25 pm)

Signed.....

Chair

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