

## **BOROUGH OF KETTERING**

at an Extraordinary Meeting of the Council of the Borough of Kettering held at the Municipal Offices, Bowling Green Road, Kettering on 29<sup>th</sup> August 2018

Present:

Councillor	James Burton (Mayor)	Councillor	Ian Jelley
“	Duncan Bain	“	Anne Lee
“	Cedwien Brown	“	Paul Marks
“	Michael Brown	“	Clark Mitchell
“	Lloyd Bunday	“	Russell Roberts
“	Ash Davies	“	Mark Rowley
“	Mark Dearing	“	Mick Scrimshaw
“	June Derbyshire	“	Jan Smith
“	Andrew Dutton	“	David Soans
“	Scott Edwards	“	Shirley Stanton
“	Ruth Groome	“	Margaret Talbot
“	Jim Hakewill	“	Mike Tebbutt
“	Jenny Henson	“	Greg Titcombe
“	Philip Hollobone	“	Kelly Watts
“	David Howes	“	Jonathan West

### **18.C.39 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Linda Adams, John Currall, Maggie Don, Cliff Moreton and Lesley Thurland.

### **18.C.40 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None

### **18.C.41 REMEMBRANCE OF FORMER COUNCILLOR, MARY MALIN**

A minute's silence was held in remembrance of former Kettering Borough Councillor and Mayor, Mary Malin.

**18.C.42**      **RIGHT TO SPEAK**

Two members of the public registered their intention to speak on Agenda Item 5 - Local Government Reform in Northamptonshire – Secretary Of State’s Invitation

**18.C.43**      **LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM IN NORTHAMPTONSHIRE – SECRETARY OF STATE’S INVITATION**

A report was submitted which requested that Council determine whether to submit a proposal to the Secretary of State for the reorganisation of local government in Northamptonshire and to endorse next steps accordingly.

The following recommendations were put before Council for consideration:-

1. That Council determines whether it wishes to respond to the Secretary of State’s invitation.
2. That subject to Council having resolved to respond to the Secretary of State’s invitation and subject to at least one other Northamptonshire principal council signing up to it, Council submits the ‘Northamptonshire Local Government Reform Proposal’.
3. That subject to the submission of ‘Northamptonshire Local Government Reform Proposal’ by any council, Council endorses the Chief Executive’s deployment of resources required to progress work on the next steps including those ahead of any decision by the Secretary of State, up to a maximum of £500k to be taken from existing budgets and/or reserves.
4. That subject to the submission of the ‘Northamptonshire Local Government Reform Proposal’ by any council, Council approves the interim governance structure of a Northamptonshire Central Programme Team overseeing a West Northamptonshire Project Board and a North Northamptonshire Project Board for the preparatory phase leading up to shadow authorities.

John Padwick addressed Council and stated his anger at the current situation whereby the financial chaos at the county council was being swept under the carpet ahead of local government reform. He criticised the consultation undertaken as part of the process as a meaningless sham and queried how the legacy of debt from NCC would be passed on to any new unitary authorities. He considered that there was no clarity in regard to an array of issues, including the number of councillors and ward boundaries under any new unitary authority and the potential for services to be outsourced or privatised. Mr Padwick concluded by noting that there was a massive challenge ahead and it

was important that the needs of Borough residents were not lost among the maze of discussions and issues faced by those involved in the reform of local government in the county.

Drew Lockhart addressed Council and stated that a North Northamptonshire unitary authority would in no way benefit the residents of Kettering and would not solve any of the financial problems that had brought the county council to its current position. Any new unitary authorities would be saddled with debt as a legacy from the county council and there were concerns that prudent borough and district authorities would have assets and finances used to plug the financial gap. Mr Lockhart considered that any new unitary authority would result in less democratic say for local residents, reduced accountability and local town and parish councils would be lost among the great number of parishes across all four of the current authorities in North Northamptonshire. He concluded by stating that the overall decision was out of KBC's hands, but a vote against the reform proposals would show solidarity with local residents.

The Leader addressed the meeting and reminded members of the background to the matter before them, noting that as a result of the fiscal position at Northamptonshire County Council (NCC), independent commissioners had been appointed by central government to oversee NCC functions, all of which found wanting. At the direct invitation of the Secretary of State, all eight principle councils in the county had sought to develop a proposal for a new system of unitary authorities to replace the current governance arrangements in the county. It was heard that although KBC and its members had not sought this task, much hard work had been undertaken to arrive at the current position whereby a submission could be made.

It was heard that the current situation presented an opportunity for vast transformational change and deep service integration, including partner organisations outside local government. The Leader stated that KBC must ensure its presence around the table when shaping the future of local government in the county for the benefit of Borough residents. It was noted that the establishment of two new unitary authorities would not solve the current funding gap affecting NCC, but would allow foundations to be laid for the required cultural changes within local government.

The Leader proposed the four recommendations which were tabled in updated form to all members, and received sufficient support for a named vote to be taken against each recommendation.

Councillor Ian Jelley seconded all four recommendations.

It was heard that both NCC and the Borough Council of Wellingborough had already agreed to support the joint submission for reorganisation of

local government in Northamptonshire at meetings held the previous day.

Councillor Anne Lee proposed and Councillor Mick Scrimshaw seconded an amendment to Recommendation 3, which would see the words “in consultation with the Leader of the Council” added to the end of the recommendation to provide additional levels of accountability given the sum of money involved.

Having being proposed by Councillor Lee and seconded by Councillor Scrimshaw that the above amendment be made, a unanimous vote was taken.

Therefore the amendment became the substantive motion.

Councillor Hakewill proposed a further amendment that would form an additional resolution, requesting that the resources of up to £500,000 required to progress work on the next steps of the local government reform process come from central government resources given that government austerity had imposed the current situation upon the Council. It was noted that such an amendment would not be admissible as the Council had no power to make such a request.

Councillor Hakewill then altered his proposed amendment so that it read as follows:

“That Kettering Borough Council lobby central government requesting that, given the circumstances of austerity, it plays its part financially and not local taxpayers”

Having being proposed by Councillor Hakewill and seconded by Councillor Groome that the above amendment be added as an additional resolution, and having attracted sufficient support for recorded vote to be taken, voting was as follows:-

Those Voting For the Motion – (8)

*Councillors Brown M, Dutton, Groome, Hakewill, Lee, Mitchell, Scrimshaw and West*

Those Voting Against the Motion – (20)

*Councillors Bain, Brown C, Bunday, Davies, Dearing, Derbyshire, Edwards, Henson, Hollobone, Howes, Jelley, Marks, Roberts, Rowley, Smith, Soans, Stanton, Talbot, Tebbutt, Titcombe*

Those Not Voting – (0)

*None*

The amendment therefore fell.

Councillor Mick Scrimshaw addressed the meeting and stated that there were a number of concerns regarding the proposed joint submission and a lack of detail regarding the shape of any new unitary authority, how services would be organised and the impact on residents. Cllr Scrimshaw considered that given the number of unanswered questions it was impossible to make a responsible decision at this stage, especially as the financial figures provided as part of the proposals could only be considered best guesses. Cllr Scrimshaw criticised the public consultation and considered that the solution to the problems faced by NCC was being dictated by central government.

Councillor Clark Mitchell spoke and stated that the current reform process was being rushed through by central government to rid themselves of the embarrassment of a failed Conservative-led county council. There was a need to step back and take time to work with partners to ensure reorganisation was undertaken properly and providing answers to resident's questions, especially when less than 1% of residents had responded to the public consultation on the issue. It was noted that should KBC vote not to approve the submission, it could still form part of reorganisation discussions should Recommendations 3 and 4 be approved.

Councillor Paul Marks stated that in hindsight, the local government structure created in 1974 had been a mistake. The proposal before members could not be considered a panacea, but the eight local authorities would have to work together to ensure the new system worked for all.

Councillor Mike Brown criticised the speaking times available to members considering the importance of the decision to be made. In addition he questioned whether KBC would be acting in the best wishes of its residents by approving the submission given the lack of proper public consultation undertaken.

Councillor Andrew Dutton stated his support for unitary authorities but questioned whether the proposal before members was the right one. He noted the arbitrary population figures that he considered were driving the two unitary authority model and stated that central government was dictating the terms of the reorganisation without justifying them.

Councillor Lloyd Bunday stated that the decision before members was a binary one. The council either voted for in favour of the proposals and would be involved in the formation of a new unitary authority, or voted against the proposal and would have reorganisation imposed upon it.

Councillor Jim Hakewill addressed Council and stated that he would be voting against whole the idea of a rushed, poorly thought-out solution and that should the Council agree to a government mandated change it would send a message that KBC accepted this solution. Cllr Hakewill

considered that the Caller Report was not a sound basis for change. He stated that neither police nor the health service wished to see two unitary authorities replacing current governance and that work should be undertaken to bridge the financial gap faced by adult and child social care rather than concentrating on reorganisation.

Councillor Anne Lee noted that starting out on any new local government structure with the current levels of debt associated with NCC carried a very high risk. The timeframe for local government reform in the county was very short and there had been no examples provided of comparative situations where such reform had been successfully achieved. The proposal before members was being imposed by central government and the fact that it was seemingly inevitable did not make it right and voting in favour of the proposals would provide them with legitimacy.

Councillor Mark Rowley spoke, initially to confirm that as Party Whip, Conservative group members were not the subject of a whipped vote. He noted that he did not want to do what was being asked of members; however it was important that KBC be a part of the discussions rather than be outside the negotiation process.

Councillor Mick Scrimshaw confirmed that the Labour group members were also not the subject of a whipped vote.

Councillor Philip Hollobone stated his anger with Conservative councillors in cabinet at the county council who had consistently made the wrong decisions in the running of NCC. He noted that the current process was an opportunity to determine the structure of local government in the county for the next 40 years. The problems faced by NCC were so deep and ingrained that it was not possible for a recovery plan to be feasible within a reasonable timescale. Those voting against the motion to submit the proposal would be voting in favour of being outside discussions to shape the future of local government in Northamptonshire.

Following debate, four named votes were undertaken and it was

**RESOLVED:**

1. That Council does respond to the Secretary of State's invitation.

Those Voting For the Motion – (23)

*Councillors Bain, Brown C, Brown M, Bunday, Davies, Dearing, Derbyshire, Dutton, Edwards, Groome, Henson, Hollobone, Howes, Jelley, Marks, Roberts, Rowley, Smith, Soans, Stanton, Talbot, Tebbutt and Titcombe*

Those Voting Against the Motion – (5)

*Councillors Hakewill, Lee, Mitchell, Scrimshaw and West*

Those Not Voting – (0)

*None*

2. That Council submits the 'Northamptonshire Local Government Reform Proposal' (Appendix 2 to this report).

Those Voting For the Motion - (21)

*Councillors Bain, Brown C, Bunday, Davies, Dearing, Derbyshire, Edwards, Groome, Henson, Hollobone, Howes, Jelley, Marks, Roberts, Rowley, Smith, Soans, Stanton, Talbot, Tebbutt and Titcombe*

Those Voting Against the Motion - (6)

*Councillors Dutton, Hakewill, Lee, Mitchell, Scrimshaw and West*

Those Not Voting – (1)

*Councillor Michael Brown*

3. That Council endorses the Managing Director's deployment of resources required to progress work on the next steps including those ahead of any decision by the Secretary of State, up to a maximum of £500k to be taken from existing budgets and/or reserves, in consultation with the Leader of the Council.

Those Voting For the Motion – (23)

*Councillors Bain, Brown C, Bunday, Davies, Dearing, Derbyshire, Edwards, Henson, Hollobone, Howes, Jelley, Lee, Marks, Mitchell, Roberts, Rowley, Scrimshaw, Smith, Soans, Stanton, Talbot, Tebbutt and Titcombe*

Those Voting Against the Motion – (5)

*Councillors M Brown, Dutton, Groome, Hakewill and West*

Those Not Voting – (0)

*None*

4. That Council approves the interim governance structure of a Northamptonshire Central Programme Team overseeing a West Northamptonshire Project Board and a North Northamptonshire Project Board for the preparatory phase leading up to shadow authorities.

Those Voting For the Motion – (25)

*Councillors Bain, Brown C, Brown M, Bunday, Davies, Dearing, Derbyshire, Dutton, Edwards, Groome, Henson, Hollobone, Howes, Jelley, Lee, Marks, Mitchell, Roberts, Rowley, Scrimshaw, Smith, Soans, Stanton, Tebbutt and Titcombe*

Those Voting Against the Motion – (3)

*Councillors Michael Brown, Hakewill, West*

Those Not Voting

*None*

(The meeting started at 7.00pm and ended at 8.28pm)

Signed .....

The Mayor

DJP