

BOROUGH OF KETTERING

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| Committee | LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM ADVISORY COMMITTEE | Item 6 | Page 1 of 3 |
| Report Originator | Martin Hammond | <i>Fwd Plan Ref:</i> - | |
| Wards Affected | All | 30 th January 2019 | |
| Title | CIVIC ISSUES | | |

1. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To consider how best to treat the various civic features of Kettering Borough Council, in the light of a transition to a new unitary council.

2. **INFORMATION**

2.1. The Borough Council enjoys the following civic features which are ascribed to it by statute and for which it is the custodian.

- The Mayoralty
- The Borough Coat of Arms
- Civic insignia such as the mace, chain of office, garments, various items of plate and decorative items, gifts from other areas
- The market charter for Kettering, which permits the holding of street markets in Kettering and which prevents the unauthorised holding of markets within five miles of Kettering

2.2. It is important to note that, with the possible exception of the market charter, these civic features refer to the whole of the Borough, and not to, say, Kettering town or any other part of the Borough. Should the Borough Council be abolished as part of the current Local Government Review process, then these features will cease to have any more than “museum status” unless steps are taken to preserve their function.

2.3. Because the civic insignia relate to, and reflect the whole of, the existing Kettering Borough, it might not be appropriate to vest them in any new town council for Kettering, although both Corby and Wellingborough appear to be taking a view that it is appropriate. Should a new town council be established and should it decide to establish a Mayor, then it would need to develop its own insignia, and possibly seek to re-adopt the coat of arms that the former (pre 1974) Kettering Council had. The physical assets that the Mayoralty currently has – the mace, chain, garments and plate could equally transfer to the new unitary council, which would need to decide what to do with them.

2.4. A decision will need to be taken about the vesting of the market charter. This could or transfer to the new authority or be vested in any new Town Council. If the charter was to lapse, then the right to hold markets on street in the town

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centre would end. This would need to be done in conjunction with the statutory orders establishing the new council.

- 2.5. Alternatively, the Council could propose the establishment of Charter Trustees, which would require a statutory order. Charter Trustees are a corporate body in which is vested the mayoral insignia, the market charter, and other similar ceremonial assets. The Charter Trustees would automatically be those unitary council members who represented wards in the area covered by it; they would not be separately elected. They would have the option of electing one of their number as a Mayor, but would have no other power and duties and would serve a purely ceremonial function, as custodians. They could not raise a precept for example. A number of Charter Trustees were established in 1974, in the place of dissolved urban district councils, and over time, most of them were replaced by parish councils. The same issue about the relevance of borough-wide insignia to the town of Kettering would, however, apply still, and it would therefore suggest that any charter trustees might have to have a geographical coverage for the whole of the existing Borough. Charter Trustees status provides a fall back if it is not possible to complete a community governance review by early 2020, and preserves civic assets to enable them to subsequently be transferred either to a town council or the new unitary council.
- 2.6. At this stage it is not clear whether the new unitary would want to have 'Borough' status and have a Mayor.

3 POLICY and RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

3.1. In time, decisions need to be made as follows:-

- to what body should the existing Borough Mayoral insignia and assets be transferred?
- to what body should the market charter be assigned?

3.2. In each case the options are:

- a future town council for Kettering
- a future charter trustees body on a geography to be determined
- the new unitary authority.

3.3. The existing Borough Coat of Arms will cease to exist in any event.

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4. RECOMMENDATION

Members are asked to form a view on the issues in this paper, in particular the questions posed in para 3 above.

Background Papers:

Previous Reports/Minutes:

Date: 21st January 2019
Contact Officers: Martin Hammond.