

BOROUGH OF KETTERING

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Report Originator	Martin Hammond	<i>Fwd Plan Ref No:</i> -	
Wards Affected	All	30 th January 2019	
Title	KETTERING BOROUGH COUNCIL'S SERVICE OFFER – WHAT WE DO DIFFERENTLY		

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To set out for members those areas of activity carried out by the Borough Council which we believe are unique within North Northamptonshire and to ask the Committee which of these features they would ideally like to see preserved, as far as is possible, should a new unitary council be created.

2. INFORMATION

- 2.1. It is important to start with a statement that this paper does not seek to describe what Kettering Borough Council does best, but rather what it does which is either unique or sufficiently different from the other local authorities in North Northamptonshire.
- 2.2. All Councils will bring something unique to the new authority, and it will be necessary for the shadow authority, and the eventual new council, to determine how it should be designed, taking into account the variety of practices, policies, cultures and philosophies that it will inherit. However, some of that discussion is happening now, and it would be helpful to members and officers engaged in the design stages to identify those features of Kettering's service offer that members value most, in order to inform our input into that debate.
- 2.3. To try to structure the discussion, a set of headings have been arrived at which seek to characterise what we do which we believe is different. This is not to decry other approaches or ignore that some other authorities may endorse these approaches as well, but to recognise these have been the building blocks for Kettering's service model. These are:-
- Providing particular services that no-one else provides
 - Our personalised approach to customer service, with wrap around services tailored to individuals, and our cross sectoral working
 - The "one team" approach we have applied to inter-service co-operation
 - A preference for an in house delivery model
 - Aspects of stakeholder engagement
 - Financial management and practice

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2.4. WIDER RANGE OF SERVICES

- a) Examples of services not provided by other districts
- Kettering Training Services
 - Crematorium (Wellingborough's is arms length)
 - Social Inclusion Team
 - Health and housing bed (un)blocking project
 - Generic Warden Service
 - Residents parking schemes
 - Museum and gallery
- b) The level of support we provide town and parish councils is also unusual – we pay for their election costs, some of their street lighting costs and we have provided practical support when asked – for example in helping secure their library offers or retaining grit bins.
- c) We are unusual in having a dedicated resource able to deal with complaints, MP inquiries, and freedom of information requests without risking inconsistency, defensiveness and lack of challenge within individual service units.

2.5. CUSTOMER SERVICE ETHOS

- a) Standards
- i) Customer service centres – KBC prides itself in having face to face interaction through its front line staff, presence in localities, and has many partner organisations present in our customer service centres.
- ii) We have resisted moving away from the one-to-one contact that our customer service centre provides; the fact it remains so busy shows it is a popular feature of our service provision. We have avoided automated phone systems and put resource into answering the phone quickly and well. Staff are not provided with “scripts” to follow; they are instead trained to respond to the issue in front of them.
- iii) The multi-agency presence in our CSC enables us to do warm handovers to other service areas, and provide a wrap around service, which has proved particularly valuable in meeting the challenges of welfare reform. The social inclusion unit is a key feature of our customer service offer, our partnership with the voluntary sector and our wrap around approach to supporting our customers.

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- iv) Within housing, initiatives such as home move, life plan and silver service put a focus on helping the individual grow and develop and become more resilient. Similarly, Kettering Training Services takes people who have not achieved within the education system, to give them life skills and employability.

b) Joined up partnership working

- i) We have described our joint working as “partnerships of scope” not of “scale”, where the focus has been on having a one stop shop for our residents. The partners making use of the customer service centre in Kettering include

- phlebotomy unit
- police desk and other police functions
- CAB, credit union and other voluntary sector partners
- Mental health navigators
- Probation

- ii) Joint work with the hospital has been extensive; we have a memorandum of understanding with KGH although in recent times, the hospital has been heavily focused on addressing their internal problems and not devoted enough time to external relationships. Nevertheless, practical on the ground services have been developed, such as the phlebotomy unit and the bed unblocking project (which we perform for North Northants, not just Kettering).

- iii) We have a strong working relationship with the police embracing:-

- a. Joint warden and police deployment and patrols
- b. Joint accommodation, with some shared powers (parking, PSPO)
- c. KBC funding of PCSOs

- iv) Kettering Futures Partnership, and work with the voluntary sector, is covered elsewhere in this note.

2.6. ONE TEAM

- 2.6.1 Our one team ethos is regularly reinforced, we take care at recruitment, particularly at senior management level, to get the right attitudes and we avoid internal conflicts, rivalries and silo thinking. At induction, we emphasise the collective, cross team approach we require of staff and this collaborative approach is reflected in how members work, at cabinet level and more widely.

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2.6.2 This approach encourages creativity, collective problem solving and allows resources to be moved more easily to meet pressures as they arise, minimising any internal wrangling.

2.7. IN HOUSE DELIVERY

2.7.1. Most obviously, we have retained our housing stock, because of the community support role we believe it provides, which has more recently enabled us to start building new council homes, but also coping with homelessness pressures and providing a platform for social inclusion work.

2.7.2. Retention in house of street scene services has proved beneficial in a number of ways – we have made significant costs savings and improvement to service delivery without the need to negotiate with a contractor, we have been able to help Northampton out when their outsourced contract failed and it has enabled the street scene partnership with Corby to be developed. We have been able to guarantee service quality, and keep high health and safety standards which would have been much harder with a contractor. We have also retained in house service provision wherever possible to provide maximum flexibility and responsiveness.

2.8. ENGAGEMENT

2.8.1. The Kettering Futures Partnership is a unique multi-agency and cross sectoral partnership which seeks to bring joined up services to customers and residents particularly to vulnerable groups. It is reflected within the customer service centre structures as well as on the ground, and within the voluntary sector.

2.8.2. We have a formal structure of engaging with town and parish councils and other interests, as experienced through the A6 Towns, Rural and Kettering Town Forums and the East Kettering Liaison Forum.

2.8.3. We are the only area with a Local Strategic Partnership which helps us engage with the voluntary, police, health and education sectors, with an annual conference for all partners.

2.9. FINANCIAL AND ASSET MANAGEMENT

2.9.1. We can be proud of our financial management track record, including provisions such as the golden rules, our performance management culture, including monthly performance clinics, our record of satisfying external audit and, more recently, our asset investment strategy, with a clear, transparent plan for how we invest.

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2.9.2 Investment in commercial, income earning assets and in housing to meet homelessness pressures, whilst not unique in North Northants, has been delivered effectively.

2.9.3. We have invested resources in developing a commercial mind set and resource which has begun to generate new forms of income and services for our community.

3. RECOMMENDATION

Members are asked to comment on those features above which they would like to see define the culture of the new council.

Date: 17th January 2019.
Contact Officers: Martin Hammond.