

BOROUGH OF KETTERING

A6 TOWNS FORUM

Meeting held: 29th January 2020

Present Councillor John Currall (Chair) (KBC/BLTC)
Councillor Mark Dearing (KBC)
Councillor June Derbyshire (KBC)
Councillor Maggie Don (KBC)
Councillor Jim French (KBC/DTC)
Councillor Ruth Groome (KBC/BLTC)
Councillor Christopher Groome (BLTC)
Councillor James Hakewill (NCC/KBC/RTC)
Councillor Allan Matthews (NCC)
Councillor Dianne Miles-Zanger (BSPC/BLTC)
Councillor Victoria Perry (NCC)
Councillor Margaret Talbot (KBC/RTC)
Councillor Mike Tebbutt (KBC)

Also Present Sgt Ken Brown, Northamptonshire Police
Jo Haines, Kettering Borough Council
Pina Patel, Kettering Borough Council
Brendan Coleman, Kettering Borough Council
Anne Ireson, Committee Administrator

19.A6TF.27 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mark Cox and Karl Sumpter

19.A6TF.28 MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the A6 Towns Forum held on 2nd October 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

19.A6TF.29 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Ruth Groome declared an interest as an employee of Northamptonshire County Council.

19.A6TF.30 POLICE STATISTICS

Sgt Ken Brown presented the Crime and Antisocial Behaviour Statistics to the forum and provided details of additional statistics that had been published that day.

The meeting noted that total crime levels had risen by 1.5% across the A6 Towns area compared with the previous year. There had been a 16% reduction in anti-social behaviour. Hate crime was reported to be a rare occurrence. Figures were provided for overall crime for each of the A6 Towns.

Sgt Brown reported the following:-

- A dedicated burglary team, “Operation Crooked”, was now operational
- A Protect Your Home (protectyourhomenorthants.co.uk) website had been launched as part of Operation Crooked and contained a virtual tour of a house in relation to security
- Householders should report all crime, secure their property and list/mark valuable items
- Reporting domestic crime had resulted in an increase in violent crime because of the way data was now recorded
- The new policing model and structure was explained (information to be forwarded to members of the forum by the police)
- Rural drink driving – the use of designated drivers was recommended
- Drugs – cannabis in particular – will be targeted, as it was at the heart of county lines dealing

Members were then given the opportunity to ask questions as follows.

Burton Latimer

Small metal canisters were becoming a problem in the civic centre car park areas.

Police presence at a future meeting of the town council was requested.

The police were thanked for their work on drug operations and for attending Burton Latimer Christmas Lights Switch-on.

Rothwell

A request was made for the Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator to attend day centres to give advice on home security to elderly, often vulnerable, people who may not have access to email or broadband to access the Protect Your Home website

Statistics were requested on Domestic Violence, as it seemed it was on the increase.

It was felt that libraries were useful as a hub for community activities. Rothwell library was opening as a community library at 11.00 am on Friday, 31st January.

Concern was expressed about “crash for cash” incidents at the Junctions 3 and 4 roundabouts of the A14. Videos were available.

Illegal parking of trucks on highways and in laybys in the area of the truck stop was reported. A request was made for traffic wardens to target illegal parking, and for perpetrators to be ticketed under the new decriminalised parking regime.

It was noted that the presentation made to Kettering Town Forum on the new policing model and structure was a public document and could be shared.

Agreed that:

- (i) Sgt Brown would ensure a more visible presence at day centres for the elderly, and also look at supplying posters/leaflets and arranging visits if required.
- (ii) Sgt Brown would email a copy of the new policing model and structure to the Committee Administrator to forward on to members of the Forum.
- (ii) All other comments be noted.

Desborough

Members commented that statistics for theft were high in Desborough and also in Burton Latimer. In response, Sgt Brown explained that a theft was recorded, even if property was eventually found, or was not stolen in the first place (lost).

General

It was noted that vehicles could be ticketed on slip roads and laybys if illegally parked up until 3rd February, and also if there was a safety issue.

Decriminalised parking enforcement took effect from 3rd February onwards.

The use of police drones instead of the police helicopter was welcomed.

It was noted that it was planned to recruit 180 extra police officers in Northamptonshire, in addition to the current recruitment which would take police officer numbers from 1,300 to 1,500. However, due to recruitment and training timescales, these officers would not become operational until the end of this year.

In answer to a question regarding police visits to schools, it was noted that no school had refused a request for police engagement. Talks included the blue butterfly project in relation to domestic violence, knife crime, gangs, drug use, respect and road safety.

Agreed that Sgt Brown look into the continued use of drug boxes in schools.

Sgt Brown was thanked for his informative presentation and attendance at the meeting.

19.A6TF.31 DRAFT BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2020/21 AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

A report was considered which presented Kettering Borough Council's draft budgets, which had been endorsed for consultation by the Executive committee at its meeting on 15th January 2020. It was noted that the formal consultation period ran from 15th January to 26th February 2020, when the budget would be formally considered by full Council.

A presentation was given outlining the Council's Current Budget Position (2019/20) the Draft Budget Proposals for 2020/21 and the key issues facing local government in the medium term, including risks. The presentation covered the:-

- General Fund
- Housing Revenue Account, and
- Capital Programme

Following the presentation, members of the Forum were given the opportunity to ask questions as follows:-

Item / Issue	Summary of Officer Response Given
<p>I have three questions on pages 3, 4 and 8.</p> <p>On page 3 the business rates prediction is the same for 5 years. Are we expecting some resurrection in high streets? Is there no impact on High Street business rates?</p> <p>Is there a presumption that premises will be retained in the unitary authority in relation to the depreciation adjustment on page 4?</p> <p>In relation to the costs of running parking services on Page 4 and the income from them, with the running down of the High Street it seems as if parking costs are preventing people coming into the town centre.</p> <p>Are there any increases in parking fees planned?</p> <p>Councillor Allan Matthews</p>	<p><i>That section on the MTFs relates to the 'Future Spending Review Period'. At this moment we have no further information on the finance settlement for future years, hence the Business Rates figure has remained as per the current year. We are awaiting the fair funding review which will impact on the settlement we get from the government.</i></p> <p><i>The depreciation adjustment relates to KBC only. We have had to set the budget on the basis Kettering Borough Council will remain a sovereign council. The budget does not take into account what premises may or may not be used in the unitary authority.</i></p> <p><i>The increase is as a result of the appointment of additional parking wardens plus other associated costs for civil parking enforcement.</i></p> <p><i>No, the increase in income relates to Civil Parking enforcement not pay and display fees.</i></p> <p>Officer Response</p>
<p>The tax freeze policy is no longer sustainable and Kettering Borough Council should increase the council tax. From 2013, the County Council increased council tax to the maximum permissible by the government. It is unsustainable to retain at zero. This causes KBC a problem. With advent of unitary authorities we will have to harmonise council tax. This will mean a significant shock to the taxpayers of Kettering.</p> <p>New Homes Bonus was for six years, now four years and will be going down to two years. After 2021/22 New Homes Bonus expires. There is a significant risk in not increasing the council tax.</p>	

<p>The £1.734m in efficiencies made is more than the total revenue of the Council. Commercial investment is not an efficiency, although staff savings are. The use of the term is misleading.</p> <p>I am pleased to see that in the medium term financial plan – efficiencies is in inverted commas. I have made this point for several years. The budget should show additional funding or revenue and a smaller amount for efficiencies. This does not make sense.</p> <p>Councillor Jim Hakewill</p>	
<p>I have looked at the figures in the context of the organisation. Northamptonshire County Council has difficulty funding adult social care, children’s services and highways maintenance. Reorganisation is an attempt to strengthen local government in the county. It is not just a question of wording, the total income that comes from the unitary authority must make up for things not being done properly at the moment. The County Council is not doing its job properly, and we will have to contribute to adult social care and children’s services, libraries and highways in the future.</p> <p>I am pleased to hear Kettering going to have a town council. The only buoyancy in the system is in parish and town councils, which can increase precepts without limit. Burton Latimer is having to increase its precept considerably to compensate for what the County Council is not doing.</p> <p>How will the rate be set and will the government put a limit on the council tax rate for the unitary, or will it take the same view as this year and put a cap on it?</p> <p>Has there been any signal that the government is considering capping town and parish councils?</p> <p>Councillor Christopher Groome</p>	<p><i>Council tax harmonisation is part of the unitary process and will need to be considered by the shadow authority.</i></p> <p><i>We have not been made aware of any capping of parish precepts from the government.</i></p> <p>Officer response</p>

The Forum extended its thanks to the Finance Team for their attendance and presentation.

19.A6TF.32 PUBLIC SECTOR REFORM UPDATE

An update was provided in relation to local government reform in the county.

The Structural Changes Order was scheduled for parliamentary time in the House of Commons and House of Lords during February and included legislation regarding the elections to take place on 7th May 2020.

A summary of work currently being undertaken through the Future Northants Programme, including the Joint Committees, was given. It was noted that the next meeting of the North Northamptonshire Joint Committee was due to take place at 6.30 pm on 10th February at East Northamptonshire Council.

During the ensuing debate, members of the Forum discussed the potential for services to be provided by town and parish councils, and if this was to be the case, funding was queried. It was noted that there had not yet been any discussions on devolution of services to town and parish councils.

Concern was expressed regarding funding for demand-led services, such as Children's Services and Adult Social Care, which it was felt could expand and 'drown out' other services, such as libraries, gritting and potholes, etc.

In response to the debate, it was noted that shaping the new organisations was still being undertaken. The Shadow Council would lead processes and make long-term decisions, but it was yet to be formed.

19.A6TF.33 RECYCLING UPDATE

A verbal update was given. It was noted that, during the past 12 months, the Council had:-

- started new shared service in Kettering and Corby
- delivered a Members' information evening in Corby on 27th January
- started to work with colleagues in Wellingborough
- shaped policies and strategies to be used by the new unitary authority
- won national awards

It was noted that food waste was considered to be high-cost and low-yield, and for that reason was not yet recycled in the Borough. However, this may become a statutory requirement by 2024 and further information from the government was awaited.

Approximately 50% of waste was recycled, but this percentage was largely dictated by the outlets that take commodities. Any waste that could not be recycled, such as pillows, duvets, cushions, scrap metal, hard plastic items, wood, hardboard and light bulbs could be taken to civic amenity sites. The Council offered a bulky waste collection service details of which were available on the Council's website.

The volatility of the market for waste was discussed. It was felt that the Council should look at creating its own outlets for materials to ensure the service was sustainable going forward into the new unitary authority.

Discussion was held on community litter picks and it was felt safety of participants should be paramount. It was noted that filled bags were collected by the Council and people discouraged from carrying out community litter picks on main roads. The Council had received good feedback from community groups in relation to litter picks.

Other issues raised were:-

- Frequency of grey bin collection
- Litter on the A14 and other arterial roads into the town
- Potential difficulties for the Council if a contractor taking recyclables failed
- Trimming of hedges on the A6003 and other roads owned by NCC
- Litter prevention campaigns, such as "Don't be a Tosser", which had received positive feedback from the public

Brendan Coleman was thanked for his attendance.

19.A6TF.34 NEWSROUND

Rothwell

NCC was going through a consultation process with Virgin Media regarding on-street electric charging points.

The Library changing from NCC control to a community trust. A soft launch would take place on Friday, 31st January.

The truck stop motel permission had been refused.

Desborough

Cllr Jim French had been elected to the Borough and Desborough Town Council on 12th December. Cllr French was welcomed to the meeting.

A new one-way system in Desborough had been approved.

Issues regarding Desborough library debates at town council meetings were being reported to the Borough Council's Standards Advisory Committee on Monday, 3rd February.

Burton Latimer

The Christmas lights switch on had been successful and police presence welcomed. The MHCLG had confirmed that money would be available to purchase the library.

The annual duck race would be held in June on a date yet to be decided.

Barton Seagrave

Nothing to report.

19.A6TF.35 FEEDBACK FROM OTHER FORUMS

Kettering Town Forum

A presentation on the new policing model had been received. Crime in William Knibb ward had reduced.

Budget questions included car parking charges, parking schemes and cremation fees.

A town centre conference was planned for Thursday, 27th February between 1.00 pm and 8.30 pm in the Council Chamber. Attendees should register at thisiskettering.com/conference.

Beat the Street – took place in Kettering from 25 September to 6th November. Further activities were planned.

Rural Forum

It was **Agreed** to take this item off the agenda as the Rural Forum meeting was always the day after the A6 Towns Forum.

19.A6TF.36 ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

- Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment
- Update LGR Northamptonshire
- Flytipping
- Plastic recycling in town centres and playgrounds
- Update on Council housing in the A6 towns

- NCALC – Danny Moody to be invited to the next meeting to talk about how towns and parishes in Northamptonshire view the unitary process

19.A6TF.37 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

19.A6TF.38 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Forum would be held on 8th April 2020.

(The meeting started at 7.00 pm and ended at 9.02 pm)

Signed
Chair

AI