

**BOROUGH OF KETTERING**

**KETTERING TOWN FORUM**

**Meeting held: 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2014**

**Present:**                    **Kettering Borough Councillors**

Councillor Mike Brown (Chair)  
The Mayor, Councillor Keli Watts  
Councillor Linda Adams  
Councillor Maurice Bayes  
Councillor David Bishop (Rural Forum Representative)  
Councillor Maggie Don  
Councillor Terry Freer  
Councillor Eileen Hales  
Councillor Jenny Henson  
Councillor Ellie Manns  
Councillor Paul Marks  
Councillor Russell Roberts  
Councillor Jonathan West

**Northamptonshire County Councillors**

Mick Scrimshaw (Northall Division)

**Representatives of Member Organisations**

Myra Bale (Kettering Private Hire and Taxi Association) –  
(Deputy Chair)  
John Kellett (Federation of Small Businesses)

**Also Present**

Sgt Simon Lloyd - Northants Police  
Graham Soulsby (Deputy Chief Executive)  
Chris Stopford (Environmental Services Manager)  
Alex Jelley (Economic Regeneration Manager)  
David Pope (Forum Administrator)

**13.KTF.22 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Steve Bellamy; Scott Edwards; Philip Hollobone and Shirley Lynch (Kettering Borough Council). Apologies were also received from Jane Calcott (Churches Together).

**13.KTF.23 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Kettering Town Forum held on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2013 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

The minutes of the Joint Forum held on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2013 were noted by the forum.

**13.KTF.24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The Mayor, Keli Watts declared a personal interest in Item 9, as a resident in an area with a resident parking zone.

**13.KTF.25 REPORTS OF THE FORUM'S REPRESENTATIVES ON THE A6 TOWNS FORUM AND THE RURAL FORUM**

Councillor Bishop reported on the Rural Forum held on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2013 as follows:-

- Rural street-lighting had been raised as an issue. Work had been undertaken by Northamptonshire County Council (NCC) and parishes to ascertain who owned specific lights. NCC had found it difficult to determine exactly which lights they held responsibility for.
- An update on the Kettering East development had been well received.
- Andrew Longley from the Joint Planning Unit had attended to provide details of employment areas.
- Concerns had been raised regarding a reduction in policing of rural areas.

**13.KTF.26 POLICING ISSUES AND STATISTICS**

Sgt Simon Lloyd attended the meeting and presented the report on ward crime statistics and policy issues.

He provided the forum with further details on specific statistics affecting the borough, as listed below:-

- The overall crime picture for the borough was good with a reduction in all major crimes, specifically burglary; robbery; theft of a motor vehicle and theft from a motor vehicle. A total reduction in crime of 14% was reported, with a 35% detection rate.
- A group of individuals previously identified as responsible

for a number of burglaries in the borough had been broken up. Two new burglary suspects were both in custody.

- Police had been noted that where burglaries and thefts relating to motor vehicles had occurred, a good proportion resulted from insecure properties and vehicles. Exploratory partnership work had been undertaken with vehicle manufacturers and property development companies to include preventative messages with their products.
- A brief synopsis was provided for crime statistics in each ward. It was noted that the police aimed to classify All Saints ward as a priority location to ensure a permanent positive change in crime levels.
- A 10% overall increase in Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) had been recorded. The vast majority appeared to be recorded under the category of “Rowdy and Inconsiderate Behaviour”. Sgt Lloyd felt this was a catch-all category, and as a result may have distorted the recording figures.
- ASB issues in All Saints and William Knibb wards were being dealt with by AO1 reports and by liaising with businesses in the vicinity.

Members of the forum raised the following questions/comments:-

Question	Answer
Regarding All Saints becoming a priority location; would not wish to stigmatise an area but rather a proactive, positive attitude should be taken to help improve the crime figures for the area.	The comment would be fed back to Inspector Tall.
Was there a correlation between green spaces and ASB statistics?	A lot of complaints were received regarding children playing in parks and complainants had to have their expectations managed. Calls regarding ASB are recorded as such regardless of whether police agree.
Had action been taken regarding anti-social drinking in Mill Road park?	Sgt Lloyd had personally been there on patrol and it had been a rarity to find someone there after a report. It had happened on occasion but there was no major issue.
What sort of issues are categorised under “Vehicle nuisance”? Could figures be supplied?	Any incident involving a vehicle is placed in that category. In the main it relates to vehicle misuse and motorcycle nuisance. Figures were available at <a href="http://police.co.uk">police.co.uk</a> but assistance could be provided if

	required.
How much time is spent prioritising the various criminal offences?	The main priority is serious crime and ASB. Police do not look into what type of ASB is being perpetrated, being led by the specific area where problems are occurring.
Figures for trespass have doubled in most wards, is there anything behind that?	Incidents have tripled from 8 to 24 during 2013. This constitutes two a month over the entirety of Kettering. Sgt Lloyd considered that this may have been a result of accurate crime recording as police were not seeing any great incidence of trespass.

Sgt Lloyd then provided the forum with a brief overview of the Street Watch scheme. It was noted that this scheme was anticipated to be launched in Kettering in the near future following successful trials elsewhere. It would be completely independent of the police, although support would still be received from the local force.

Street Watch would consist of pairs of volunteers providing high visibility foot patrols in their areas for the purpose of crime prevention and public reassurance. The aim was to get people more involved with their own communities and engender an improved community spirit. Street Watch volunteers would be asked to donate two hours of their time a month to the patrols and were not being asked to replace police or involve themselves in confrontation. Approximately fifteen volunteers were required to get the scheme off the ground and the forum was asked to help spread the word regarding the scheme.

### **13.KTF.27 TOWN CENTRE DEVELOPMENTS - UPDATE**

Alex Jelley attended the meeting and provided a presentation regarding past, current and future developments in regard to Town Centre Regeneration to enable the forum to take stock of previous achievements and to note future plans currently in the pipeline.

Alex updated the forum as follows:-

- KBC had a strong vision for the town centre that was enshrined in planning policy. The council had been creative and innovative in terms of funding sources.
- 2009 had seen the completion of redeveloped Market Place and planning permission granted to the Market Place Buildings. The forum were reminded that following the cutting of external funding; elected members had

agreed to fund the project themselves with external funding brought in at a later stage if available. Kettering's Town Centre Occupancy Rate (OR) matched the national average of 88%.

- In 2010, Grant Shapps MP, had visited the town to announce the New Homes Bonus, which assisted in filling the funding gap for the Market Place Buildings. OR fell nationally by 1%, but remained stable in Kettering
- 2011 saw the topping off of the Market Place Buildings swiftly followed by the letting of all the apartments within the buildings by the Autumn. Although pressure grew to let the commercial units, KBC held firm to its aspirations. Ellandi purchased the Newlands Centre and Kettering was 3% above the national average of OR at 89%.
- Public realm works commenced in January 2012 and national chain restaurant Prezzo opened in the Market Place Buildings. The visiting Olympic Torch played a part in summer celebrations in the Market Place and OR stayed 3% above the national average.
- Public Consultation regarding the next phase of public realm works took place in 2013, along with a refurbishment of the Newlands Centre by Ellandi and Chimichanga letting the final unit in the Market Place Buildings. Small Business Saturday initiative also commenced. The OR improved to 4% above the UK average at 90%.
- Delivery of the next phase of public realm works would commence in Spring 2014 with a new traffic control system for the pedestrianised part of the town centre. Newlands Street bus exchange would be drastically improved and Newlands Centre Phase 1 would commence, providing a step change in the town's national retail offer.
- Work had commenced on The Yards development site and the Corn Exchange would become the next part of the restaurant quarter following remedial works. Kettering's markets would also continue to be developed.

Alex concluded by noting that all the successes and achievements that KBC had managed during the period 2009 to date were carried out in a time where there had been very clear financial constraints and lack of external funding. It was considered that all projects in the pipeline were deliverable despite constraints on the council financially.

Members raised the following issues:-

- In terms of shopping, Kettering town centre was deemed by one member to lack quality shops that would

encourage shoppers to visit.

- Despite the expenditure and work over the last five years, Town Centre Occupancy Rates (OR) had not shown a massive improvement. Although when compared to the national average the OR appeared good, it would be more useful to benchmark against towns of a similar size and demographic.
- Although public realm works were applauded, it was important to maintain the town centre. Brendan Coleman would be invited to a future meeting of the forum to discuss street cleaning and how it could be improved.
- Was it possible to do anything about the poor street scene in Newlands Street?

Alex responded to the comments as follows:-

- It was believed that Kettering was doing well for a town of its size and demographic, although there was always room for improvement. The Newlands Centre Phase 1 would hopefully encourage national brands into the town. Small Business Saturday was one method of assisting local retailers and the coverage they receive.
- Benchmarking occupancy rates with similar and neighbouring towns would be looked into with a report to return in 2015 setting out the findings.
- The council could only affect areas it had direct control over, it was not possible to force shop owners to improve their store fronts. The council had previously offered to improve shop fronts of vacant units resulting in aesthetic improvements but also aiding the letting of the units concerned. It had been noted that whenever an area of the town centre had been improved, private business was more confident in providing additional improvements.

### **13.KTF.28 RESIDENTS PARKING - UPDATE**

A presentation was given by Chris Stopford regarding Residents Controlled Parking Zones. The forum noted that there was a range of zones in place across the town, adjacent to Kettering General Hospital and near Wicksteed Park. Town Centre zones had been in force since the early 1990's, although it was not until November 2012 that enforcement of the zones became KBC's responsibility.

Zones were signage based, with no lines marked on the highway. All zones had twin plated entry signs with additional discretionary repeater signs dotted throughout. These were under constant review to ensure they were sufficient.

Initially only residents and business permits had been available for purchase. Having taken onboard comments made during consultation exercises, there was now a number of additional permits available, including:-

- Temporary residents permits
- Visitor scratch cards
- Temporary business permits
- School parking permits
- Carer permits

The majority of permits issued were visitor parking permits, totalling approximately 1400, with just under 600 resident permits. Enforcement of parking infractions had been anticipated to fall from November 2012 following robust efforts by wardens, but this had not occurred and enforcement notices were being issued at approximately 200 per month. Enforcement was intelligence led with resources targeted to areas where abuse of the system took place.

If a new zone was requested it had to meet a 60% in favour threshold as set by KBC's Executive Committee. If a "no" vote occurred, a scheme could not be reconsidered for two years, or one year after the implementation of a scheme in surrounding roads. A review of zones would not take place until 12 months after implementation and would be based on evidence submitted to, or gathered by, KBC. Reviews would not take place more than once every five years.

Members made the following comments:-

- Was it possible to remove the prerequisite for carers permits to contain the vehicle registration number?
- Was it possible to introduce a permit for elected members and council staff who had to visit residents in areas with resident parking zones?
- Could schemes be reviewed on individual merits? Bowhill was causing a parking issue, was any action being taken?
- Could visitor scratch cards have the option to input an arrival time rather than requiring two to be used for overnight parking?
- Does ID have to be provided every time new visitor scratch cards are required?
- Are there any solutions forthcoming for the issues at Headlands and the laybys on Pytchley Road?
- What is the revenue generated from parking enforcement?

Chris made the following comments in response:-

- The prerequisite for carers permits to contain the vehicle registration had already been removed.
- Permits for elected members and council staff would be examined.
- A report was being prepared for senior management regarding parking issues at Bowhill.
- Inputting arrival times onto visitor scratch cards would be examined with the card manufacturers. There was approximately six months of existing stock remaining.
- ID had to be presented when renewing all permits and passes to counteract fraud. Three fraudulently obtained permits had been cancelled in January alone.
- Parking on Headlands was an issue that was being examined, although there was not a clear consensus as to the solution, a resident parking zone may not be the best option.
- A meeting would be held with senior management regarding the laybys in Pytchley Road. If a resident parking zone was introduced, parking on grass verges would be prohibited, thereby reducing parking provision.
- No data was to immediately to hand regarding revenue generated from parking enforcement, although figures could be supplied outside the meeting.

### **13.KTF.29 BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2014/15 AND PREPARING FOR THE MEDIUM TERM**

A report was submitted by Graham Soulsby as an information item detailing the Council's draft budget proposals for 2014/15.

Key issues in the report were highlighted to members of the forum, especially those relating to Kettering town centre. Members noted that a figure of approximately £250k had been allocated to enable the new traffic control system in the pedestrianised area of the town centre to be taken forward.

Members made the following comments:-

- Kettering had a vibrant voluntary sector and increases in fees and charges for use of community centres hit these organisations hard. It was important that when the budget is set to appreciate this and keep increases to a minimum. If increases are to be made, KBC should increase awareness amongst organisations affected.
- Management fees had increased for Pasture Caravan Site; could this be explained?



- The budget for homelessness had been reduced for 2014/15; was this realistic as homelessness was on the increase?
- The lack of external organisations present during the budget consultation forum was a concern.

Graham Soulsby made the following comments in response:-

- Management fees for the caravan park had increased due to an increase in the number of pitches. No income had yet been received for these additional pitches, but would be factored in as pitches were filled.
- It was considered that the homelessness budget was realistic based on the data to hand. Preventative action had cost more than envisaged, but it was hoped this would result in better long-term solutions. Effectiveness of services would be constantly reviewed.
- External organisations included as part of the constitution were all invited to attend the forum. However, it was noted that the main focus of the budget consultation was the meeting to which Town and Parish councils and business contacts were invited to attend.

**13.KTF.30 FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

It was suggested that the following items be included on future agendas of the Forum:-

- Police Issues and Statistics
- Town Centre
- Neighbourhood Watch
- Street Cleansing
- Wicksteed Park

*(The meeting started at 7.00pm and ended at 8.45pm)*

Signed: .....  
(Chair)

djp