**SUMMARY OF MAIN COMMENTS MADE ON THE DRAFT BUDGET PROPOSALS**

1. **– STATUTORY BUDGET CONSULTATION MEETING – 22nd JANUARY 2015**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Item / Issue** | **Summary of Response Given** |
| There appears to be no provision for single temporary accommodation for the homeless at the moment. Lots of people are homeless and there is nowhere for them to be accommodated. What is being done?  What is happening with the SWEP money when temperature temporarily drops below zero?  Kettering does not have a night shelter. There is one in Corby run by St Judes. A number of properties are empty. Is there any reason why Kettering cannot have a building for this purpose? There are volunteers who are willing to help staff such a facility in Kettering.  ***(Ms Jane Calcott – Churches Together)*** | The Council is looking at proposals to provide temporary accommodation in Kettering. Further details will be available in a report due to be considered by the Executive in February.  £80,000 is included in the budget for emergency provision for the homeless. SWEP forms part of that sum.  The Council has a preventative approach to homelessness. Details of this will form part of the report to the Executive Committee on 18th February. The reports will be publicly available on the Council's website.  ***(Mark Dickenson – Acting Head of Finance)*** |
| What does the sum for Central Support Services cover? This figure seems very high, and amounts to 40% of the total budget.  ***(Cllr Fergus Macdonald – Burton Latimer Town Council)*** | Central Support Service costs represent the cost of supporting frontline services.  Legislation requires that the Council reflects the costs of delivering services in its budget. These costs form part of every budget and the Council looks to make savings where possible. It covers a large amount of areas.  The Classification of ‘central support costs’ is prescribed by regulations  ***(Mark Dickenson – Acting Head of Finance)*** |
| I would question a proposed 0% increase in Council Tax. It will become increasingly difficult to balance the books in future years. Would it not be better to have a small increase to avoid a larger one later on? This represents a burden on tenants.  ***(Brent Woodford – Tenants' Forum)*** | We are looking to becoming more commercial in future. We do not want to lose control, so we are looking at generating funds in a different way.  ***(Councillor Russell Roberts – Leader of the Council)***  Decisions on the General Fund are totally separate to those taken in relation to the Housing Revenue Account. There is no correlation.  ***(Graham Soulsby – Deputy Chief Executive)*** |
| **Item / Issue** | **Summary of Response Given** |
| What is meant by the Council becoming more commercial in future? It is a term that is also referred to in the report.  ***(Richard Bowles – Resident of Pipers Hill Ward)*** | Kettering Borough Council is looking at a number of potential opportunities including the possibility of entering the renewable energy market. If we are involved in providing energy, we would want to take some of the surplus, and any profit made would help the Council’s budget position.  ***(Councillor Russell Roberts – Leader of the Council)*** |
| Will the Council investigate government initiatives to build more Council houses?  ***(John Kellett – Federation of Small Businesses)*** | This is something Kettering Borough Council wants to do.  ***(Councillor Russell Roberts – Leader of the Council)*** |
| *Of all the savings made this financial year, how much has been passed down to the parishes? Are the precepts being increased? We are being advised that savings are to be passed down to Parish Councils.*  ***(Councillor Mark Rowley – Geddington, Newton and Little Oakley Parish Council)*** | *None of the specific savings that KBC are making in 2015/16 will result in a financial burden being passed onto Town or Parish Councils.*  *We will collect the whole amount of precepts set by Parishes and give the whole amount back to parishes.*  ***(Mark Dickenson – Acting Head of Finance and Russell Roberts – Leader of the Council)*** |
| What happens to the interest on Section 106 money that is held in the bank? What does the Council do with it?  ***(Councillor Fergus Macdonald – Burton Latimer Town Council)*** | Any interest earned overall on balances is held in our account to help the overall cash situation. Interest is not credited back to individual funds..  ***(Graham Soulsby – Deputy Chief Executive)*** |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Item / Issue** | **Summary of Response Given** |
| Northamptonshire County Council is making cuts to their accounts and has overspent. Will this have any effect on Kettering Borough Councils future budgeting?  ***(Brent Woodford – Tenants' Forum)*** | We are dealing purely with the Kettering Borough Council budget. We are obviously a part of Northamptonshire but Kettering Borough Council stands as described. We aim to keep, and maintain, a balanced budget.  ***(Councillor Russell Roberts – Leader of the Council)***  Sometimes when Northamptonshire County Council make decisions to cut or change the way it delivers certain services, this can impact on Kettering Borough Council. There are guiding principles contained in the Executive report – for example, if the County Council cuts services, KBC will not step in to provide these services and thus provide substitute funding. In practice, if there is a knock-on effect, Kettering Borough Council would identify this and try to have a conversation with the County Council,  ***(Graham Soulsby – Deputy Chief Executive)*** |
| If funding for vulnerable adults was cut, would Kettering Borough Council just ignore this?  There are lots of people in supported living and hospital care is changing to care in the community. It is a city council and county council responsibility, but if this is a statutory obligation would you not challenge this?  ***(Mr Laurence Humphries – Resident of Pipers Hill Ward)*** | If it was a statutory responsibility of Kettering Borough Council we would provide the service. We would not provide the service if it was a statutory responsibility of the County Council.  A Council can change the way it delivers services, but it remains that organisation's responsibility.  ***(Graham Soulsby – Deputy Chief Executive)*** |

1. **MONITORING & AUDIT COMMITTEE – 27th JANUARY 2015**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Item / Issue** | **Summary of Response Given** |
| Recognition of the wonderful job that everybody has done over the past few years to balance the budget but concerns about the medium term viability and likely impact on services.  ***Cllr Bayes*** | Medium term sustainability is the key issue. Although KBC is in a better position than most, we are not immune to the challenges the medium term will bring.  It is possible that the majority of Revenue Support Grant will disappear in a few years, which is why we’ve got to make the case to retain more business rates, New Homes Bonus and look at commercial investments to improve our asset base and generate income we wouldn’t otherwise get. We have time to plan and do it properly at this point  ***Officer Comment*** |
| **Item / Issue** | **Summary of Response Given** |
| Concerns raised about the volatility of business rates and whether the Government might decide to give county council’s a greater share of business rate income.  ***Cllr Bishop*** | The concerns raised were fair and very real in the case of business rate volatility (especially business rates appeals).  KBC have had some significant success to shape that particular scheme and a case study has been presented to Exec detailing the success we’ve had. Northants authorities have received £20m they would not otherwise have got, as a result of KBC’s proactive approach.  ***Officer Comment*** |
| The importance of exploring (and implementing) commercial ventures and help the medium term budget position was the correct approach and should be commenced as soon as possible.  **Cllr Howes** | A separate report about how this may be taken forward will be considered in due course (as outlined in the Executive Budget Report).  ***Officer Comment*** |
| The point was made that we mustn’t forget that there’s a lack of capacity at the council, staff have not been replaced even though there have been no redundancies.  Why had the budget for Flood defence changed so much between the years?  ***Cllr Donn*** | The changes on the Flood Defence budget was due to last year’s Sandbag exercise (in effect hopefully a one-off).  ***Officer Comment*** |
| In light of the overall expenditure contained in the draft Capital Programme, the view was expressed that the swimming pool is in need of significant investment and that this should be done now whilst the cost of borrowing money is cheap.  ***Cllr Bishop*** | There is a modest sum in the draft Capital Programme for ongoing maintenance and improvement of the swimming pool.  The Council will need to be clear what its priorities are for the future – to balance the budget the Council has already indicated that it will look at capital investment decisions from a more ‘commercial viewpoint’ – ie, risk and returns. Investment into a community asset such as a swimming pool is unlikely to generate a budget benefit to the Council or help close the budget gap. It may be possible however for the income generated from commercial ventures to be put towards more community focused activities if there is sufficient surplus once the budget gaps have been closed – that will be a political choice at the appropriate time.  ***Officer Comment*** |
| **Item / Issue** | **Summary of Response Given** |
| The issue about a new crematorium being built in Wellingborough was identified along with the possible implications that this may have.  Also, the issue of recycling credits was raised in connection with the proposals contained in the County Council’s draft budget papers.  ***Cllr Tebbutt*** | The Council is aware of the possibility that a new crematorium may be built in Wellingborough and will need to consider the issues that this may bring, in due course.  KBC don’t accept that NCC can legally impose any change to the current arrangements for recycling credits, without agreement between the relevant parties.  ***Officer Comment*** |

1. **KETTERING TOWN FORUM – 2nd FEBRUARY 2015**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Item / Issue** | **Summary of Response Given** |
| The Council should consider putting some capital expenditure into refurbishing Kettering Swimming Pool as investment in this facility is badly needed for the benefit of the whole Borough.  ***Cllr Bishop*** | Cllr Bishop expressed the same point at the recent meeting of Monitoring and Audit Committee (Please refer to earlier comment and response in section 2 of this Appendix)  ***Officer Comment*** |

1. **A6 TOWNS FORUM - 4th FEBRUARY 2015**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Item / Issue** | **Summary of Response Given** |
| Northamptonshire County Council has identified savings of £7m. Have these savings been taken into account and reflected in Kettering Borough Council's budget?  ***Councillor Allan Matthews (Desborough Town Council and Northamptonshire County Council)*** | The savings required by NCC in this area are an issue for NCC and have not impacted on the draft KBC budget figures. A dialogue is ongoing with NCC about the different options that they may wish to consider.  ***Officer Comment*** |

1. **RURAL FORUM – 5th FEBRUARY 2015**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Item / Issue** | **Summary of Response Given** |
| Councillors felt that the savings figures should be explained in more depth with more information to be provided on what savings had been made and where they had been made and where there were cuts still to be made.  ***Cllr Watson (Geddington, Newton and Little Oakley Parish Council)***  The same comments and questions had been made at the Monitoring & Audit Committee on 27th January 2015.  ***Cllr Howes*** | The report to the January Executive outlines the draft budget proposals for 2015/16. Efficiency savings are a combination of additional income and reductions in expenditure.  No services had been cut to date.  ***Officer Comment*** |
| Cllr Jelley had implied at the Budget Consultation that a new policy was being considered to generate more income through revenue.  ***Cllr Ward (Loddington Parish Council)***  If there was to be a new policy then more explanation and information would be required.  ***Cllr Squires (Stoke Albany Parish Council)*** | Schemes for revenue generation would have to be submitted to other committee meetings before being accepted and adopted.  ***Officer Comment*** |

1. **Comments from the Research and Development Committee and Tenants Forum will be circulated prior to the meeting.**