

BOROUGH OF KETTERING

KETTERING TOWN FORUM

Meeting held: 12th September 2016

Present: **Kettering Borough Councillors**

Councillor Lloyd Bunday (Chair)
Councillor Maggie Don (Deputy Chair)

Councillor Linda Adams
Councillor Duncan Bain
Councillor James Burton
Councillor Anne Lee
Councillor Clark Mitchell
Councillor Mick Scrimshaw
Councillor Lesley Thurland
Councillor Greg Titcombe
Councillor Keli Watts
Councillor Jonathan West

Northamptonshire County Councillors

Councillor Eileen Hales MBE
Councillor Bill Parker

Representatives of Member Organisations

Sgt Scott Little – (Northamptonshire Police)
Eleanor Patrick – (Civic Society)
Alastair McNee – (Wicksteed Park)
Kamal Paul – (Resident)

Also Present

Shirley Plenderleith (Kettering Borough Council)
John Conway (Head of Housing)
Sarah Parr (Kettering Borough Council)
David Pope (Forum Administrator)

16.KTF.15 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from The Mayor, Cllr Scott Edwards, Cllrs Ash Davies, Ian Jelley, Jenny Henson, Philip Hollobone, Shirley Lynch and Mike Tebbutt. Apologies were also received from Jane Calcott (Churches Together).

16.KTF.16 MINUTES

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting of the Kettering Town Forum held on 25th July 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

16.KTF.17 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Greg Titcombe declared a personal interest in Item 11 – Open Spaces in the Town as a member of the Friends of Rockingham Road Park.

Councillor James Burton declared a personal interest in Item 8 – Town Centre Update as a market trader

Councillor Lesley Thurland declared a personal interest in Item 11 – Open Spaces in the Town as a member of the Friends of Rockingham Road Park.

16.KTF.18 REPRESENTATIVE ON THE A6 TOWNS FORUM

There were no volunteers to be the Kettering Town Forum representative on the Rural Forum.

16.KTF.19 POLICING ISSUES AND STATISTICS

Sgt Scott Little attended the meeting to present the police statistics for the last 24 months.

It was noted that total crime in the town had risen by 13.7%, with significant increases in arson and shoplifting offences. It was heard that there was no identifiable pattern to the arson offences and shoplifting statistics had increased due to the reinvigoration of the Kettering Retail Crime Initiative, with a lot of previously unreported offences now being captured.

The forum heard that one of the main priorities for the force was tackling vehicle crime, burglary and theft, with a number of events undertaken in relation to prevention which had been well received by attendees. Insecurity patrols were still being undertaken by officers, especially around Kettering Leisure Village and Burton Latimer.

As part of a drive to cut offences, Kettering had obtained the services of the Pro-active Team from Northampton who had undertaken a wide range of enforcement work with a high number of arrests in relation to serious acquisitive crime, drug and weapons offences.

Violent offences had risen and Night-time Economy venues had received a briefing around issues that were arising. It was noted that the Pubwatch scheme was growing and had begun to attract members from outside of the town. A recent drugs dog operation had successfully targeted pubs and other night-time venues across the town.

ASB had reduced across the sector by 9%, with summer patrols undertaken across the Borough. The closure of an address on Oxford Street following continued complaints of ASB in the area was noted. Joint patrols with street wardens to enforce PSPO regulations had commenced with street drinking one of the areas targeted and a number of fixed penalty notices issued.

Looking forward, police were planning for Halloween and Bonfire Night and visiting schools in conjunction with the Fire Service and an educational event was scheduled for school children to be held at Wicksteed Park.

The forum heard that the crime resolution figures presented in the police statistics were inaccurate.

Questions were raised in regard to parking enforcement outside schools. It was noted that police liaised with schools and made visits in both the morning and afternoon to provide enforcement, however the level of enforcement provided was dependent on resources and the availability of PCSOs.

The meeting was advised that photographic evidence of dangerous parking could be passed to Sgt Little, with drivers written to with a warning regarding their parking.

16.KTF.20 POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER SESSION

The forum was advised that a meeting with representatives from each of the geographic forums would be held with the Police and Crime Commissioner on a future Friday, with an exact date to be confirmed. Four representatives from the forum were sought to attend the meeting.

Representatives were nominated as follows:-

Cllr Mick Scrimshaw (KBC)
Cllr Bill Parker (NCC)
Cllr Maggie Don (KBC)
Cllr Duncan Bain (KBC)

16.KTF.21 TOWN CENTRE UPDATE

The forum was provided with an update in relation to town centre activities and was also informed that Alex Jelley, Economic Regeneration Manager had now left KBC.

Tourism Website

A new Kettering tourism website was in production that would provide useful information for people visiting the area, not only on areas of interest within the Borough, but in also in the surrounding areas. The exact look of the website was being finalised, with it expected to go live within a couple of months, initially on a small scale. As more people started to use the website, feedback from visits could be used to make additions and improvements. A further update would be supplied to a future meeting of the forum.

Kettering Markets

The current focus for the markets was on their functionality and appearance. There was an awareness that each market day functioned in a different manner and work would be undertaken to understand where improvements were required to assist both traders and the town centre offer.

Foodie Friday had provided Friday markets with a real boost, although expansion of the market was currently constrained by available infrastructure such as a lack of town centre power points. It was hoped that this could be addressed in the near future. It was noted that the Wednesday market had expanded significantly during the previous few years and methods of extending the trading hours were being examined.

The teenage market had proved to be successful, providing youngsters with a route into trading in a safe, low-cost environment. There was an intention to continue this market, including pitches being made available at the Christmas light switch-on event on 24th November.

Purple Flag

A mini-assessment had recently been undertaken in relation to the Purple Flag award, due to the requirement for KBC to reapply for accreditation. It was hoped that the submitted bid would be sufficient to retain Purple Flag status and work was ongoing with

local businesses and licensees to continue to improve the town centre and the Night-time Economy.

Chesham House

The meeting heard that, as from the 1st September, all available office space in Chesham House was fully let. Plans were in place to move the Economic Development Team out of the building to allow for additional tenanted space. Discussions would be held with tenants as to their future requirements, with any revenue raised reinvested into the building.

Kettering by the Sea

The final day of Kettering by the Sea (KBTS) for 2016 had been Friday 12th August with 285 people counted as attending, with a similar number having attended on the opening Friday. It was noted that good weather had encouraged people to attend and a number of local businesses had been active as part of the Healthy High Street group. Various events had been held in the town centre including a family fun day at the museum that had been very well attended. Feedback related to KBTS received had been extremely positive.

The forum asked questions in relation to the following topics:-

- The possibility of a farmer's market
- Links to events in the Borough on the tourism website
- Interaction with independent retailers
- Plans for the Cherry Tree pub
- The future of the Naseby and Royal hotels
- Increased market opening hours
- A replacement for the Economic Regeneration Manager
- Seeking sponsorship for KBTS to allow it to run for longer

16.KTF.22 WICKSTEED PARK UPDATE

Alastair McNee, the Managing Director of Wicksteed Park attended the meeting and provided the forum with an update on progress at the park since his previous visit and to provide details of future plans.

The forum heard that since taking over as Managing Director at the attraction three years previously, there had been an aim to make Wicksteed Park a strong and compelling proposition to day visitors and to build customer loyalty. A sustainable business model was imperative, as was a need to work closely with stakeholders and to enhance the natural environment within which the park stood

The meeting heard that work undertaken on and around the lake within the park had resulted in a wonderful natural environment, with enhanced habitats such as reed beds providing a valuable home for wildlife. The improvements made had resulted in a huge increase of visitors walking, jogging or cycling round the lake which was now wheelchair accessible. A number of free-play areas had been installed around the perimeter of the lake to encourage natural play. It was considered that this area of the park now worked as a space and engaged visitors.

The installation of the RUSH zip wire, one of the longest in the country, was noted as being a success, with remodelling of other buildings and attractions around the park as follows:-

- Enclosing of the Astroglide ride
- Installation of a very popular tree-top walk
- Creation of a meerkat enclosure with tunnel viewing points
- Remodelling of the dry ice rink to form a walk-through aviary
- Creation of a garden filled with wooden statues and carvings
- Soft play centre replacing the old arcade area
- Opening of a shop selling old-fashion sweets

It was reported that website hits had doubled in the past three years to an annual figure of more than half a million, with an increase in peak summer traffic.

The last two summers had been a success for the park, with good weather encouraging visitors and the alterations listed above contributing to an increase in on-site spending from visitors. As the operating company was not-for-profit, all profits made were invested back into the park. Satisfaction scores from visitors had increased, with fewer complaints received and positive experiences of the park had spread by social media and word of mouth.

Although a positive upward trend was noted for the park overall, there remained challenges to be faced, including the future introduction of living wage regulations which would require the company to double its profits in order to remain in the same financial position as it currently was.

Future plans for the park included:-

- Removal of the pirate ship ride due to excessive maintenance costs with an oscillating carousel swing installed in its place
- Installation of a large, wooden tree house in an oak tree, to be used for children's parties and as a play space
- The creation of a farmyard area, providing a covered space for families

- Installation of another tunnel experience, possibly featuring exotic animals

The meeting heard that Tracey Clarke had recently been appointed as the new Community Manager for the park, with part of her job being to engage with stakeholders, including KBC.

A Heritage Lottery Funding bid would be resubmitted by December following the rejection of an initial bid. It was heard that should the bid be successful, up to £2.5m of funding could be received that would be used to restore parts of the existing pavilion, creating an ice-cream parlour and an upgrade of the playground to feature play equipment from the 1920's.

Mr McNee concluded that improvements to the park had helped to bring additional income into Kettering's economy and that going forward the tourism agenda was critical for the Borough.

Members thanked Mr McNee for his attendance and presentation and asked questions in relation to:-

- The food offer at the park
- Movement of traffic on roads around the park during big events
- The fact that the successful car boot fair had ceased
- Illegal parking from park visitors on Paradise Lane

16.KTF.23 TOWN CENTRE LICENSING HOURS

A report was submitted which sought to provide the forum with details of current licensing hours for premises in Kettering town centre.

It was queried whether it would be possible to restrict the opening times of premises for the sale of alcohol in the town centre. However, it was heard that although there were facilities in existing legislation around cumulative impact on surrounding areas, the evidence test required to achieve the requisite level was so high it was unlikely to be achievable.

Further questions were asked in relation to Club Aqua's licence, police resources and government lobbying.

16.KTF.24 OPEN SPACES IN THE TOWN

Sarah Parr, Grounds Services Manager attended the meeting and provided the forum with an update in relation to town centre parks and flower displays.

The meeting heard that the work undertaken in the town centre to create floral showpieces, colourful spaces and planters attracted the majority of compliments received by the service. Design work commenced at the beginning of the year ready for summer and all plants were chosen to be pollinator friendly, with more exotic species being utilised in order to attract such insects.

There was an aim to stretch floral features as far from the town centre as possible, with additional barrier planters and two extra beds installed at the bottom of Northampton Road. It was anticipated that 2017 could see planting continued towards the northern end of the town.

The forum praised the work undertaken by the team, noting that their work was an asset to the town.

16.KTF.25 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Concerns were raised regarding highway safety at the top of Northampton Road, with a request that barriers be extended. It was also noted that pedestrians were not being given long enough to make a safe crossing by the timed lights at the pedestrian crossing near Sheep Street. It was noted that these issues could be raised using the county council's Street Doctor system or via county councillor members.

A request was also made for the electronic gateway signs at the entrances to Kettering to be used in a more effective manner with additional and clearer information on forthcoming events.

(The meeting started at 7.00 pm and ended at 8.29 pm)

Signed.....
Chair

DJP