

BOROUGH OF KETTERING

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Meeting held: 7th December 2016

Present: Councillor Russell Roberts (Chair)

Councillors Lloyd Bunday, James Burton, David Howes,
Ian Jelley, Mark Rowley, Jan Smith and Lesley Thurland

Also Present Councillors Ash Davies, Maggie Don, Ruth Groome, Clark
Mitchell and Keli Watts

16.EX.53 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mark Dearing.

16.EX.54 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

16.EX.55 MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the
Committee held on 16th November 2016 be
approved and signed as a correct record

16.EX.56 WORK PROGRAMME

The Council's draft work programme to be published on 13th
December 2016 was noted.

16.EX.57 MAINTAINING A DURABLE BUDGET

A report was submitted which: -

- a) Provided Members with a reminder of the Council's medium
term financial strategy and associated guiding principles;

- b) Illustrated the latest budget model, the delivery of efficiency savings for 2016/17 and the estimated level of budget savings that may be required over the next few years; and
- c) Provided an update following the Governments Autumn Statement Announcements.

It was reported that good progress was being made on 2017/18 budget using the same framework as previous years. It was noted that £950k of savings had already been identified leaving £245k to be found.

Members heard that The Chancellor of the Exchequer announced the Autumn Statement on 23rd November. The headline announcements were as follows:

Housing & Infrastructure

The government would be publishing a White Paper shortly, setting out a comprehensive package of reform to increase housing supply and make housing more affordable.

It was pleasing that some of the ideas Kettering Borough Council have been discussing directly with the Government about unlocking consented housing schemes and bringing development forward seemed to have had an influence on, or at least be in step with, Government thinking. The Council endeavoured to continue constructive dialogue with the government on these issues.

The commitment to extending Right to buy to housing associations was reaffirmed. The Government were considering how the legislation on Higher Value Assets would be implemented. The intention had been that local authorities would be required to make a payment to central government based on their High Value Assets – the actual means for how this would work had not been determined. No such payments will be required in 2017/18

The Government decided not to implement Pay to Stay which would have required Council Tenants with taxable incomes over £31,000 to pay a market or a near market rent. This could have increased the amount of rent paid by tenants. It was intended that the increase in rent would have been paid to central government.

Business Rates

The Government previously announced that there would be a number of national changes to business rates reliefs and exemptions. This was reaffirmed in the Autumn Statement as the Chancellor said that Business Rates would reduce by around £6.7bn over the next five years. The Government previously said that local authorities would be funded for these changes.

New Homes Bonus

Changes to New Homes Bonus (NHB) were yet to be announced. At the 2015 Autumn Statement £800m nationally was removed from NHB. Our lobbying position had been that those who deliver more than their fair share should get a higher weighted award compared to those who do not. More details on NHB funding may be included in the Local Government Finance Settlement.

Council Tax

There was no mention in the Autumn Statement on government's expectations on council tax increases. It was therefore assumed this would be the same as 2017/18 which, for Kettering, would mean 2% or £5 per year whichever was greater.

It was noted that the situation regarding the Disabled Facility Grant remained unchanged and together with other Districts and Boroughs, the Council was very clear that legally the County Council had no right to with-hold this money or pay in instalments. Kettering Borough Council would continue to try and recover the outstanding money so that it could be spent correctly on our residents.

After discussions Councillor Ian Jelley proposed and Councillor James Burton seconded and it was

RESOLVED that the Executive noted the following:

- a) The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy and associated guiding principles;
- b) The Council's current Medium Term Financial Forecast and the progress being made for the delivery of efficiency savings for 2016/17 and future years; and
- c) The key updates made in the Autumn Statement and the uncertainty in relation New Homes Bonus.

16.EX.58 LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME

A report was submitted which

- a) Reminded members of the background to the national abolition of Council Tax Benefit (CTB) and replacement Localised Council Tax Support (LCTS) which came into effect from April 2013;
- b) Reminded members of the Council's financial guiding principles;
- c) Outlined the findings from the public consultation undertaken;
- d) Outlined the key strategic choices that were available to the Council following the consultation; and
- e) Requested the Committee to make a recommendation to Council in relation to the changes in the Council Tax Support Scheme to be effective from 1st April 2017.

Members heard that the Council had undertaken an extensive consultation process and the responses were included in the report. The majority of those who responded indicated a preference for Option 4 – which was to freeze the taper at 45%.

Kirsty Wood from Kettering MIND addressed the Executive and spoke about the tragedy of suicide and the detrimental effect of financial strains. She urged the Executive to bring Council Tax Support in line with the national average.

Councillor Keli Watts addressed the Executive and requested that the Council Tax Support should not be reduced any further.

Councillor Ruth Groome addressed the Executive about her involvement with delivering food parcels to families on low incomes through the local church. Most of the deliveries were made to families with both parents in work and she asked the Executive not to reduce the Council Tax Support any further.

Councillor Maggie Don addressed the Executive and thanked Councillor Thurland and the rest of the team for spreading the word regarding the consultation. Although it was disappointing that only just under 600 people responded to the consultation this would have been a lot lower if the work had not been carried out.

The Leader thanked Councillor Don for her involvement with the consultation.

During discussion members acknowledged the cross party working with regards to the consultation. Discussion also took place regarding the current situation with benefits and other issues in the County and felt it was important to freeze the Council Tax Support until the next announcement from the Government.

Members requested that figures for how many people attending the venues during the consultation be included in future reports. They also requested that village drop in sessions be included in the next consultation.

Following discussions Councillor Smith proposed and Councillor Jelley seconded and it was

RESOLVED that the Executive recommended the following to Council: -

- a) That although there was a slight preference not to keep the Local Council Tax Support scheme in line with the Housing Benefit Scheme two of the three no preferences would have no financial impact on customers, therefore to enable the Council to administer the LCTS fairly the recommendation was that with effect from 1st April 2017, the following changes are made to ensure that the scheme remained current and where appropriate in line with the Housing Benefit Scheme
 - i. Limit applicable amounts to 2 dependent children
 - ii. Reduce absence from home outside of Great Britain to 4 weeks
 - iii. Remove work related activity component
 - iv. Remove severe disability premium where another person is paid Universal Credit (Carer's Element); and
- b) Having considered the responses from the public consultation and the information contained within this report, Option 4 was

the preferred option.

16.EX.59 INTERNAL AUDIT CONTRACT AWARD

A report was submitted the purposed of which was to note that the current Internal Audit contract ends on 31st March 2017, and to inform members a formal tender process had been undertaken and the report summarised the outcome of that process and made a recommendation about the award of contract to be effective from 1st April 2017.

Members heard the procurement process was undertaken using an OJEU compliant framework. The framework enabled the procurement process to be simplified as these companies had already been through a tendering process. The Council used the framework provided by the North of England Commercial Procurement Collaborative; this covered both local government and the NHS and was an established framework offering access to a panel of specialist providers of Internal Audit.

The framework provided by the North of England Commercial Procurement Collaborative allowed for a direct award of internal audit services. An evaluation process had been undertaken to ensure best value was achieved for the Council.

Table 1 in the report showed the annual cost of each provider, with company A seen to be the providing the best value.

Following discussions Councillor Smith proposed and Councillor Howes seconded and it was

RESOLVED that the Executive Committee approved: -

- a) That the preferred bidder for the Internal Audit Contract is Company A; and
- b) That authority be delegated to the Head of Democratic and Legal Services in consultation with the Head of Resources to conclude and sign the contracts with Company A.

Following the resolution the Executive were informed that the

successful company were Coventry and Warwickshire Audit Services.

16.EX.60 YOUTH ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

A report was received by the Executive to approve of the final report and conclusions of the Youth Engagement Task and Finish Group.

Councillor Ash Davies addressed the Executive and reported that the Youth Engagement Task and Finish Group was established by the Research and Development Committee, following a successful motion at Council in April 2016, to explore ways in which the Council could better engage with, listen to, and inform young people in the Borough.

The Task and Finish Group met six times between July and October to consider its approach, survey the Council's current activities and take evidence from individuals and groups. Following the evidence received the Task and Finish Group identified five sections, each dealing with a strand of activities: -

1. Project based initiatives
2. Consultation Forums
3. Social Media
4. Topic based information provision
5. Engagement with civic leaders, elected members and Council staff and services

The recommendations to the Executive were structured under these headings.

It was noted that the Task and Finish Group provided an opportunity to identify what the Council currently did with regards to engaging young people.

Councillor Clark Mitchell addressed the Executive as a member of the Task and Finish Group and outlined the importance of promoting apprenticeships in the Borough. He also strongly supported the recommendation of a Mayors Cadet.

Councillor Keli Watts addressed the Executive and outlined the success she experienced having a Mayors Cadet when she was Mayor.

During discussion the following points were raised: -

- Schools had problems releasing pupils so it was felt the recommendation to tap in to existing school youth councils would be advantageous
- The idea of an annual conference would be successful if there was full support from schools
- Young people shadowing Councillors would be a great experience

The Deputy Leader congratulated the Task and Finish Group on their report and proposed Councillor Jan Smith to be the Cabinets Young Person’s Champion. Councillor Jelley Seconded this motion and it was

RESOLVED that Councillor Jan Smith be appointed as the Cabinets Young Person’s Champion

Councillor Don addressed the Executive regarding work she had carried out with young people recently.

Members were invited to attend Southfields School to receive a presentation detailing the scheme carried out which provided budget management advice, involving a project where students produced and sold goods, aimed at 13-14 year olds, with financial set up costs met by the Council and with charities benefiting from the profits raised.

Councillor Thurland proposed and Councillor Howes seconded and it was

RESOLVED that the Executive approved the Youth Engagement Task and Finish Group final report

(The meeting started at 6.30 pm and ended at 8.30 pm)

Signed
Chair