

BOROUGH OF KETTERING

RURAL FORUM

Meeting held: 30th November 2017

Present:

Borough Councillors

Councillor Jim Hakewill (*Chair*)

Councillor David Howes

Councillor Mark Rowley

Councillor Anne Lee (Kettering Town Forum Representative)

County Councillors

Councillor Victoria Perry

Parish Councillors

Councillor Brent Woodford (Ashley)

Councillor Angela Beardsmore (Braybrooke)

Councillor Pat Scouse (Broughton)

Councillor Robin Shrive (Broughton)

Councillor Alan Garratt (Dingley)

Councillor David Watson (Geddington, Newton & Lt. Oakley)

Councillor Paul Gooding (Harrington)

Councillor Alan Durn (Loddington)

Councillor Roy Waddington (Loddington)

Councillor Fay Foster (Pytchley)

Councillor Andrew Macredie (Pytchley)

Councillor Frances Pope (Thorpe Malsor)

Councillor Paul Wharin (Warkton)

Councillor James Woolsey (Warkton)

Councillor Brian Peel (Weekley)

Councillor Nick Richards (Wilbarston)

Councillor Rosalind Willatts (Wilbarston)

Also Present:

Lisa Hyde (Kettering Borough Council)

Brendan Coleman (Kettering Borough Council)

David Pope (Forum Administrator-KBC)

Sgt Rob Offord (Police)

Actions

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APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Chris Smith-Haynes and Allan Matthews (NCC) and Parish Councillor Hillary

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Bull. Apologies were also received on behalf of Great Cransley Parish Council.

17.RF.29 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None

17.RF.30 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Rural Forum held on 21st September 2017 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

17.RF.31 **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

16.RF.50 - Town & Parish Notifications of Planning Related Applications

The forum requested an update regarding planning notifications. It was heard that parishes that had requested electronic notifications were now receiving them, although the system was not mandatory. Details of any changes to the current system would be communicated to parishes.

17.RF.32 **RURAL BROADBAND**

Paul Bimson, BT's Regional Partnership Director for the East Midlands attended the meeting and provided details of the ongoing superfast fibre broadband rollout as previously requested by the forum.

The meeting heard that the government plan to have 95% of the UK's premises capable of accessing superfast broadband speeds of 24MB/s and above was progressing well. BT Openreach was working with local authorities across the country to achieve this target, with the initial contract to provide 90% coverage achieved four months ahead of schedule, and the second contract for 95% coverage set to conclude by the end of 2017.

In addition to providing infrastructure for existing premises, BT Openreach also provided infrastructure free of charge for new developments where more than 30 plots were planned, with

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arrangements for smaller developments negotiated with developers.

Independent research indicated that 97.1% of the Borough could access speeds of 30mb/s and above. Members heard that the upgrade was a vast technological undertaking and presented a great engineering challenge.

Details of currently available technologies were provided to the meeting, who noted that existing speeds of 80MB/s could soon be exceeded, possibly offering speeds of up to 330MB/s, with an aim to reach 10 million properties across the UK by 2020. As a result of having an open access network, any service provider could access the technology installed by BT Openreach which in turn was driving down costs to consumers. In addition, Fibre on Demand would be available anywhere that had Fibre to Cabinet technology by running a cable to any premises on demand. This option could prove beneficial for small communities or business parks.

The meeting was provided with details of Openreach Community Fibre Partnerships, which enabled communities to raise funding to deliver new technology infrastructure. The government had a grant scheme in place whereby any property with internet speeds of less than 2MB/s could apply for voucher worth up to £350 per premises. It was heard that the government would be extending the scheme for a further 12 months.

It was heard that there was a trial underway in remote rural areas to boost 4G signal to allow for speeds between 10-40MB/s. There was a further plan to extend this trial nationally.

The forum asked questions in relation to:-

- Project Stage 3 consultation
- “Where and When” information
- Government Voucher Scheme
- Future Roll-out Contracts
- Business Voucher Scheme
- Increasing ADSL capabilities

The forum was advised that further information on the broadband rollout could be obtained from the websites listed below:-

www.superfastnorthamptonshire.net
www.communityfibre.bt.com
www.superfast-openreach.co.uk/where-and-when/

The forum thanked Mr Bimson for his attendance and presentation.

17.RF.33 COUNTY COUNCIL BUDGET CHANGES

County Councillor Ian Morris attended the meeting and provided a brief overview of the proposed county council budgetary changes and the associated consultation.

The meeting heard that a number of proposals regarding budget amendments were being consulted on, including:-

- Libraries
- Bus subsidies
- Winter Road Service 2018
- Highways maintenance work (grass cutting, sign cleaning etc.)

It was noted that significant savings needed to be made to assist in delivering a balanced budget. A large number of consultation responses had been received to date, with proposals relating to libraries attracting significant attention.

In relation to bus subsidies, the proposal on the table would see the County Connect service ended, alongside the majority of non-profitable subsidised routes.

Winter service reduction would see gritting routes reduced across the county to 36% coverage across A-roads, arterial roads and school routes. Gritting levels were currently higher than the national average, and it was heard that this would reduce to a level closer to this average. Currently a route out of every village in the county was gritted, but this may not be the case going forward.

Cuts to highway maintenance such as grass cutting and gully clearance would only be for a period of 12 months, as there could be adverse outcomes arising should it continue for a longer period.

The forum noted three options available as part of the consultation in relation to libraries, although retaining the current service level would not be possible. It was hoped that local communities could be encouraged to take over operation of the facilities, with a residual service provided by the county; however,

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this was not one of the options currently being consulted upon.

The meeting heard that without rebalancing of funding from central government, NCC would have to make savings where it could in order to allow for the continuation of statutory services whilst still providing a balanced budget.

The forum was provided with the opportunity to ask questions on the following topics:-

- Bus subsidies
- Gritting and grit bins
- Precepting to pay for additional gritting related services
- Further NCC savings required in December
- Grass verge maintenance and highway safety
- The future of the libraries service

The forum was thanked for its questions and members were encouraged to provide feedback and comments as part of the ongoing consultation process.

It was heard that KBC's Executive Committee had passed a resolution which noted and understood the challenges faced by the County Council, but there remained an agreed policy position that KBC would not step in to cover any services that were lost following the county's budgetary amendments.

Help and support could be offered to any community groups looking to become involved in the operation of the libraries service. It was also noted that KBC customer service centres currently located within library buildings in the A6 Towns would still be offered, even if their location had to change in future.

17.RF.34 TOUR OF THE NEW POLICE FACILITIES - KETTERING

At the meeting with the Chief Constable and the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) on 23rd October, an offer had been extended to members of the forum to tour the new police hub in Kettering on 23rd January 2018. A total of eight forum representatives expressed an interest in attending this tour.

A further six members expressed an interest in touring the Wootton Hall police facilities and the 101 control centre. It was agreed that a date and time be arranged and communicated to those wishing to attend.

DJP

17.RF.35 **KETTERING TOWN CENTRE HIGHWAYS IMPROVEMENTS**

A brief update was supplied to the meeting in relation to future plans to consider whether to allow two-way traffic on Eskdail Street in Kettering town centre. This work, if undertaken, would form part of the Town Area Action Plan that had already seen extensive works to Northampton Road and Bowling Green Road.

A consultation exercise would be undertaken by the County Council early in 2018, with a decision made by Spring 2018.

17.RF.36 **POLICE STATISTICS**

Sgt Robert Offord attended the meeting and was introduced as the new Rural Sergeant replacing Sgt Scott Little.

A request was made for parishes to receive contact details for their police representative under the new policing system introduced at the meeting with the Chief Constable and PCC.

The following topics were detailed to the forum:-

- Members were provided with locally identified priorities forms for completion
- There was the possibility for parish councils to fund ANPR cameras for their community, any interested parties should contact Sgt Offord
- Neighbourhood Alerts – Forum members were encouraged to sign up to the scheme that allowed for speedy communication of police activities in their area.
- A new Police Facebook page would be operational within 2 to 3 weeks.

17.RF.37 **FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

The following items were noted for future meetings of the Forum:-

- KBC Budget 2018/19
- Solar Panels on Buildings – update
- Philip Hollobone MP – Views on Future Structure of Local Government

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17.RF.38 **DATES OF NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the date for the next meeting of the forum would be 1st February 2018.

(The meeting started at 7.00pm and ended at 9:10pm)

Signed

Chair

DJP