

BOROUGH OF KETTERING

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Meeting held: 12th June 2018

Present: Councillor Duncan Bain (Chair)

Councillors Cedwien Brown, Mike Brown, Jenny Henson, Mick Scrimshaw, Mike Tebbutt and Greg Titcombe

Also Present: Martin Hammond (Executive Director)
Helen Edwards (Head of Democratic and Legal Services)
Guy Holloway (Head of Corporate Development)
David Pope (Committee Administrator)

18.RD.01 ELECTION OF CHAIR

Councillor Cedwien Brown nominated and Councillor Mike Brown seconded Councillor Duncan Bain as Chair.

RESOLVED that Councillor Duncan Bain be duly elected as Chair of the Research and Development Committee for the municipal year 2018/19.

18.RD.02 APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY CHAIR

Councillor Jenny Henson nominated and Councillor Cedwien Brown seconded Councillor Greg Titcombe as Deputy Chair.

RESOLVED that Councillor Greg Titcombe be duly elected as Deputy Chair of the Research and Development Committee for the municipal year 2018/19.

18.RD.03 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Ash Davies. It was noted that Cllr Cedwien Brown was acting as substitute for Cllr Davies.

18.RD.04 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Research and Development Committee held on 4th April 2018 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

18.RD.05 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr Cedwien Brown declared a personal interest in agenda item A3 as a member for Rothwell ward, a Rothwell Town Councillor and as a member of the Rothwell Library Community Trust.

18.RD.06 **ITEM OF URGENCY – CORPORATE PLAN 2018 - 2020 (Item 6)**

It was noted that the above item had been accepted as urgent business by the Chair under the provisions of Section 100B 4(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 to ensure that scrutiny feedback could be provided to the Executive Committee prior to the formal adoption of the Corporate Plan 2018-2020 at Full Council.

This item was accepted to be taken later in the meeting.

18.RD.07 **RIGHT TO SPEAK**

Three members of the public and Cllr Jim Hakewill registered their intention to speak on agenda item A3.

18.RD.08 **LIBRARY PROVISION IN ROTHWELL AND DESBOROUGH (A3)**

Due to the number of interested parties in attendance, it was agreed that this item be moved up the agenda.

A report was submitted that outlined the current known position for library services in both Rothwell and Desborough and asked members to consider proposals for the Borough Council to intervene to help protect library services in the A6 Towns.

Cllr Jim Hakewill addressed the committee and stated that both Rothwell and Desborough libraries would close and lose all service provision unless the buildings that housed them were purchased by Kettering Borough Council. He stated that KBC was not being asked to run the library services, but simply to purchase the buildings,

thereby retaining them as community assets. Cllr Hakewill questioned KBC's financial "golden rules" and stated that there were clear business plans able to be submitted for the operation of the library services should KBC purchase the buildings. The Asset of Community Value (ACV) positions for both buildings and the request for a judicial review of the decision to close the libraries were referenced. Cllr Hakewill concluded by stating that the libraries could be saved and that a purchase by KBC could be justified using its own guiding principles.

Kate Ley addressed the committee and provided details of the work undertaken by Rothwell Community Library Trust (a Charitable Incorporated Organisation) in putting together a plan to allow for the continuation of library services should either a lease be agreed or the building purchased by KBC. Details of a link between the trust and Ise Brook School were provided, the school having a desire to run an element of educational provision within the library should the service continue. It was heard that NCC had yet to respond in relation to any requests to lease the library building and the trust had to make its financial position clear to NCC by 25th June.

Cllr Jo Taylor, representing Save Desborough Library Group, Friends of Desborough Library and as a member of Desborough Town Council provided details of the current position with regard to Desborough Library and ongoing discussions with NCC. It was heard that a Charitable Incorporated Organisation was in the process of being created and a decision regarding an ACV application for the library building was anticipated in the very near future.

Cllr Christopher Groome of Burton Latimer Town Council (BLTC) advised the meeting that a public meeting had recently been held in Burton Latimer in relation to the threat of library closures, with over 160 attendees. The BLTC position had been to support the retention of the complete library service in the county, not just the service in Burton Latimer. It was recognised that the community hub aspect of libraries was of great importance and it was only relatively recently that NCC had won a national award for having the best library service in the country. It was heard that BLTC had convened a group to monitor the ongoing situation, and would do everything it could to support retention of services.

Questions were asked in relation to the funding of proposed services that could take over library service operation. It was heard that the proposals for both Rothwell and Desborough libraries could fund rental of the buildings should that become a possibility.

Members discussed KBC's financial "golden rules" and considered whether purchase of the library buildings could be funded from the Council's revenue budget. They were advised that the Executive would test any proposals against its golden rules to ensure that

these were not breached before making a decision.

Members of the library groups offered to provide copies of their draft business plans to the Council.

RESOLVED That the Research and Development Committee recommend to the Executive Committee that it consider the capital purchase of Rothwell and Desborough library buildings and that it call an emergency meeting to make a decision on the matter prior to the 25th June deadline set by Northamptonshire County Council.

18.RD.09 CORPORATE PLAN 2018 - 2020 (Item 6)

Members received a report that provided them with the opportunity to consider the draft Corporate Plan 2018–2020 and to provide feedback to the Executive Committee prior to its formal adoption at Council.

The meeting noted that the Corporate Plan detailed the Council’s vision, strategic objectives and priority areas for action for the next two years and beyond.

Cllr Tebbutt noted that the previous version of the corporate plan had, under the heading for Sustainable Growth, contained reference to improvements of all town centres in the borough, but the current version only detailed Burton Latimer S106 delivery.

Cllrs Mike Brown and Mick Scrimshaw commented positively on the inclusion of the new build council housing programme.

RESOLVED That comments on the Corporate Plan 2018–2020 as outlined above be submitted to the Executive Committee.

18.RD.10 CONSTITUTION AMENDMENTS (A1)

The Committee was presented with a report which sought member comments on proposed amendments to the Council’s constitution, prior to referral to the Executive Committee and thence on to Council for adoption.

The meeting noted that the majority of the amendments were simple “tidying” changes, for example the standardisation and updating of officer job titles throughout the document. A new provision for the

Monitoring Officer to make such minor amendments in future under delegated powers was included and there was the inclusion of a new Whistleblowing Policy that widened the scope of the policy to include external whistleblowers such as contractors and members of the public.

It was noted that the only substantive change was one that sought to amend the time limit for speaking at council meetings, reducing speech time from the existing 8 mins to 5 minutes for the mover of a motion and to allow 3 minutes for all other speakers, except where the consent of the mayor or committee chair was provided.

Members considered the reduction in speaking times and commented that it may restrict debate and wished that this comment be forwarded to the Executive Committee. All other amendments were accepted.

A minor error of omission was noted on page C2 in relation to the Planning Committee. This would be amended.

RESOLVED that the Committee recommended to the Executive Committee that it approved the proposed amendments to the Constitution, and recommended them to Council, subject to the inclusion of the comment regarding the proposed reduction in speaking times as outlined above (18.RD.05).

18.RD.11 WARD INITIATIVE FUND – REVIEW OF RESTRICTIONS (A2)

The Committee was asked to consider current restrictions on the use of the Ward Initiative Fund (WIF) by elected members and to decide whether such restrictions should be reviewed.

The meeting was provided with current guidelines on use of the WIF, a list of “do’s and don’ts” and a copy of similar guidelines applied by a neighbouring authority for comparative purposes.

Members considered that current guidelines were too restrictive and suggested the removal of two prohibitions as set out below. In addition, it was noted that on occasion it had proved difficult for potential recipients to obtain invoices prior to funding being required. Relaxation of this requirement was therefore suggested.

RESOLVED That the Committee recommended to the Executive Committee that the following amendments be made to the Ward Initiative Fund guidelines:-

Removal of the following prohibitions:-

- i) Any request where the beneficiary has received or is set to receive funding from any other scheme of the Borough Council or County Council; and
- ii) The Ward Initiative Fund will not substitute itself as a provider/funder of services when another public provider cuts such a service; and

Where appropriate, to enable Ward Initiative Fund payments to be made upon receipt of quotes or pro forma invoices to enable fund recipients to receive payment in a timely fashion.

18.RD.12 UNITARY COUNCILS TASK AND FINISH GROUP (A4)

The Committee was presented with a set of draft Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Unitary Councils Task and Finish Group as requested at the previous meeting of the committee.

It was heard that it would be beneficial for members to consider those aspects of the approach to service delivery taken by Kettering Borough Council which members valued and should therefore ideally inform the principles and operational set up of any new unitary authority. In addition consideration of the parishing of currently unparished areas of Kettering was included as part of the ToR.

With regard to membership of the group, it was considered that this decision be delegated to the individual group leaders.

RESOLVED

That the Committee endorsed the Unitary Councils Task and Finish Group terms of reference as set out in the report and delegated the decision for membership of the committee to group leaders.

18.RD.13 CAR PARKING CHARGING STRATEGY (A5)

The Committee considered a report that provided a high level overview of the current Council car park charging strategy and detailed the impact of a reduction in charges.

Discussion was held regarding the respective manifesto pledges of both the administration and opposition groups made during the 2015 Borough Council elections and whether a series of car parking charge amendments agreed by the Executive Committee at its November 2017 meeting constituted a reduction in charges.

RESOLVED

That based on the manifestos for both the administration and opposition at the 2015 Borough Council elections, that the Executive Committee reviews and revises downwards the cost of car parking charges in Kettering town centre.

18.RD.14 WORK PROGRAMME 2018/19 (A6)

The Committee's work programme was submitted for consideration.

An update was provided in regard to the Swimming Pool Task and Finish Group in regard to staffing changes and the lack of response from other facilities the group had hoped to visit, that had affected the progress of the work of the group.

A request was made that a discussion on the challenges facing town centres would be an appropriate future item.

(The meeting started at 7.00pm and ended at 9:15pm)

Signed:

(Chair)

DJP