

BOROUGH OF KETTERING

RURAL FORUM

Meeting held: 31st January 2019

Present:

Borough Councillors

Councillor Jim Hakewill (*Chair*)
Councillor David Howes
Councillor Cliff Moreton
Councillor Mark Rowley
Councillor Lloyd Bunday (Portfolio Holder for Finance)
Councillor Anne Lee (Kettering Town Forum Representative)

Parish Councillors

Councillor Brent Woodford (Ashley)
Councillor John Lillie (Brampton Ash)
Councillor David Watson (Geddington, Newton & Lt. Oakley)
Councillor Kevin Burton (Gt Cransley)
Councillor Paul Gooding (Harrington)
Councillor Sue Jackson-Stops (Harrington)
Councillor Fay Foster (Pytchley)
Councillor Bruce Squires (Stoke Albany)
Councillor Frances Pope (Thorpe Malsor)
Councillor James Woolsey (Warkton)

County Councillors

Councillor Allan Matthews
Councillor Chris Smith-Haynes

Also Present:

Lisa Hyde (Kettering Borough Council)
Mark Dickenson (Kettering Borough Council)
Jo Haines (Kettering Borough Council)
Dean Mitchell (Kettering Borough Council)
Sgt Robert Offord (Northamptonshire Police)
David Pope (Forum Administrator-KBC)

Actions

18.RF.24 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Peter Hooton, Andy Macredie, Pat Hobson, Nick Richards and Paul Wharin. Apologies were also received from Great Cransley PC and Brendan Coleman (KBC).

18.RF.25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

18.RF.26 MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Rural Forum held on 4th October 2018 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

18.RF.27 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

18.RF.08 – Future Agenda Items – Grit Bins

It was heard that the Chair, Cllr Hakewill had made representations to NCC's Portfolio Holder for Highways in an attempt to have Kier continue to fill all grit bins under some form of contract with affected town and parish councils, however the level of costs sought by Kier were prohibitive and it would prove more economic for parishes to source grit elsewhere.

18.RF.17 – Loss of Bus Services in Rural Areas

Following the last meeting of the forum, a meeting had been held with parties from Mawsley PC, Nick Richards (Wilbarston PC), Patricia Hobson (Pytchley PC), Cllr Hakewill and Brendan Coleman to consider the idea of a minibus service that may provide a transport lifeline to some of the rural areas in the Borough. A further meeting was scheduled for February and details would be sent to parishes.

18.RF.18 – Briefing on Unauthorised Encampments

The Chair and Cllr Woolsey would draft a letter to Philip Hollobone MP regarding the rules and regulations around unauthorised gypsy and traveller encampments. A request would be made for leaflets issued by the PCC on the subject to be sent to parish councils.

**Chair /
CllrJW**

It was heard that KBC did not hold specific figures for clean-up costs relating to unauthorised encampments. In relation to future traveller site provision a piece of work was still being undertaken on behalf of North Northamptonshire authorities and an update was requested as to when this would be available.

18.RF.28 PUBLIC SPEAKERS

None

DRAFT BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2019/20 AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

Group Accountant Jo Haines attended the meeting and gave an overview on the budget proposals for the next financial year as well as the council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Members of the forum heard the Executive Committee had started the formal consultation period for the Council's budget on the 16th January, and that the public budget consultation had been held on 24th January. Members noted that the views of all three Geographic Forums would be sought during the consultation period which would conclude on 27th February when the budget would be formally considered by Full Council and Council Tax levels set.

Members of the forum were informed that that during the financial year 2018/19, the Council's Budget Delivery Framework had helped to deliver £1.473 million in savings. The forum heard that central government's core grant to the council for the financial year 2019/20 was indicated to reduce by £115,000. This was £250,000 better than the figure previously modelled in the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy as a result of negative RSG being removed from the settlement.

It was reported that efficiency savings of £1.562 million had been identified for 2018/19 using the Council's Budget Delivery Framework. Members then heard that the majority of these savings would be achieved through income from commercial investments, Business Rates income from increased growth, Treasury Management Income, joint working as part of the shared Street Scene Service with Corby BC, additional government Homelessness Grant and additional income from New Homes Bonus.

It was reported to the forum that over the previous eight years council tax had been frozen. However, there was no longer any incentive provided by the government for local councils for freezing council tax rates and officer advice was to increase Council Tax to the threshold level of 3% for 2019/2020.

On average, just over £1m of ongoing efficiency savings would be required each year to 2023/2024 on top of the existing £12.8m savings made to date since 2010. The Government was consulting on a Fair Funding Formula for local authorities and the implications of this could have a significant impact on the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy. In addition, changes to the Business Rates retention scheme from 2020 posed a real risk to the Council. The retention rate would increase from 50% to 75% but the critical factor would be the point from which growth was measured. This was likely to be based on 2018/19 resulting in growth from previous years being lost.

HRA fund and capital programme details were also supplied, with the meeting noting that the capital programme of £29.3m represented a significant commitment.

Members of the forum asked the following questions in relation to the draft budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy:

Item / Issue	Summary of Response Given
<p>Is there a synopsis available of the make-up of the efficiency savings?</p> <p>(Cllr Paul Gooding – Harrington Parish Council)</p>	<p>Within the report that went to Executive Committee (16th January), Table 6 provides an overview of where efficiencies have come from and Table 7 provides further narrative in relation to those.</p> <p>(Mark Dickenson – Head of Resources)</p>
<p>What is an “efficiency”, is it the same as a saving?</p> <p>(Cllr Fay Foster – Pytchley Parish Council)</p>	<p>In terms of how efficiencies are described, one element is where we have looked at bringing in additional income and one is where we have looked at reducing expenditure.</p> <p>(Mark Dickenson – Head of Resources)</p>
<p>New Homes Bonus is a payment made based on the number of houses being built, although it is described as an efficiency in the budget. It is not. In the long term, the more houses we have, the more we will have to build and the more services the Council will need to be provide. In the long run it is an inefficiency.</p> <p>(Cllr David Watson – Geddington, Newton & Little Oakley Parish Council)</p>	
<p>I would regard a council that does the best it can to achieve its budget as a very efficient council, especially one that can make this amount of income. I think this council is very efficient in doing that.</p> <p>(Cllr Cliff Moreton – KBC)</p>	
<p>One of the reasons the balanced budget helps residents in the Borough is that there is no proposed increase in Council Tax for the 8th year running and we would not be able to achieve that if we were not generating income.</p> <p>(Cllr David Howes – KBC)</p>	

18.RF.30 PUBLIC SECTOR REFORM

A brief presentation was provided to the meeting outlining the context and current status of Local Government Reform in the county and the potential timeline going forward.

Background to the proposal for alternative governance arrangements to form two unitary authorities in the county was provided, with the meeting noting that this had been submitted to the Secretary of State (SoS) in August 2018.

It was noted that should the SoS move forward with the submission, the services provided by the four districts in North Northamptonshire would be amalgamated, with county council functions for the area disaggregated and subsumed into the new body.

The government had made clear that following any submission there would either be no action taken, or a formal strategic consultation process would be undertaken on the proposal submitted. The latter option was taken forward, with the consultation commencing on 29th November 2018 and due to close on 25th January 2019. The options available to the SoS once the consultation concluded were:

- To implement the proposal as submitted
- To implement the proposal with modifications
- Not to proceed with the proposal

Key Dates that formed a possible timeline were provided. Discussions with civil servants had indicated that a final decision could be made by SoS before the Parliamentary Easter recess on 4th April. Once the decision had been made, the government would need to go through the parliamentary approval process resulting in a Structural Change Order (SCO). Again, indications were that this may happen prior to the summer recess in mid-July 2019.

The SCO would legally disband the current local authorities from a specific date, legally set out interim governance arrangements and legally create the new unitary authorities. All final decisions regarding the SCO would be made by the SoS. Senior government officials had requested that each local authority provide preferences on issues attached to the SCO.

Once the SCO had been approved, there was a duty to hold a meeting of the shadow Council within 14 days of approval and a meeting of the shadow Executive within 21 days. In addition, a great deal of detailed work would be undertaken in the in background in terms of the creation of the new authorities to allow for safe and legal services to be delivered from day one, potentially 1st April 2020.

The budget process for the new authorities would be undertaken roughly between December 2019 and March 2020, with budgetary decisions and Council Tax setting to be made by the shadow authority, with a full membership of over 160 elected members.

The meeting heard that should 1st April 2020 be the chosen date for the commencement of the new unitary authorities, the existing authorities in the county would cease to exist from 31st March 2020. Shadow arrangements would continue until new elections were held in May 2020 that would provide elected members for the new unitaries.

An update was provided from the Local Government Reform Advisory Committee meeting held the previous night at which issues relating to the future of civic functions and regalia and the possible parishing of Kettering were discussed. In regard to the latter issue, a recommendation had been made to Council to formally ask for the approval of the commencement of a Community Governance Review to consider the possibility of parishing Kettering town and to fix its boundaries

18.RF.31 CASUAL VACANCIES ON PARISH COUNCILS

It was heard that as part of the Northamptonshire (Changes to Years of Elections) order 2018 clarification was being sought from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) as to the impact of the order on casual vacancies in the final six months of a Council's administrative term.

Clarity was sought in relation to three points as follows:

- Is the six month period curtailed as of 14th January to come into force again in November 2019?
- Does the six month period become an eighteen month period following the implementation of the Order?
- What happens to those seats on Town and Parish Councils that became vacant between November 2018 and 14th January 2019?

The MHCLG had committed to providing an answer at the earliest opportunity and this information would be forwarded to all relevant authorities.

18.RF.32 CRANSLEY PARK DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

A brief update was provided to the meeting in regard to the development at Cransley Park.

It was noted that units at the site would be ready for occupation during February, but it was understood that none of them had currently been sold or leased.

It was heard that a planning application for a drive-through coffee-shop at the site had seen concerns raised by the Highways Authority. It was reported that

discussions were ongoing with the site developer for the possible creation of an access road through the estate for the row of cottages adjacent to the site.

18.RF.33 SUPERFAST BROADBAND NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

An update on the status of the rollout of superfast broad band in the county was supplied to the meeting.

Concern was being raised regarding internet provider engagement in Thorpe Malsor and the Chair advised that he would pick this complaint up for action.

Chair

18.RF.34 POLICE STATISTICS

The police statistics were taken as read.

Sgt Robert Offord attended the meeting and provided a supplementary update in regard to specific police activities locally. Copies of posters detailing the Rural Neighbourhood Police Team and new policing priorities were provided to the meeting.

It was heard that additional funding arising from any rise in police precept would go towards neighbourhood policing teams, tackling burglary offences, bolstering rural crime teams and policing in rural areas as well as tackling drug dealing and ASB.

Sgt Offord referenced theft rates in Queen Eleanor and Buccleuch and Slade wards, especially in reference to thefts from parked lorries. It was hope that the new lorry park at Orton would help to alleviate this issue.

It was noted that an 800% increase in drug offences in Welland Ward was due to crimes being logged with the custody suite as the offence location. This would be fed back and rectified on future crime reports.

New police Locally Identified Priorities would be issued on 1st February with a link emailed to forum members.

**Sgt O/
DJP**

18.RF.35 FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

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

- Police Statistics (standing item)
- Public Sector Reform (standing item)

18.RF.36 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the next meeting of the Rural Forum would take place on 4th April 2019.

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

Signed

Chair

DJP