

BOROUGH OF KETTERING

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Meeting held: 6th February 2019

Present: Councillor Duncan Bain (Chair)

Councillors Ash Davies, Ruth Groome, Jenny Henson, Paul Marks, Mick Scrimshaw and Greg Titcombe

Also Present: Lisa Hyde (Executive Director)
Mark Dickenson (Head of Resources)
Shirley Plenderleith (Head of Public Services)
Ola Oduwole (Interim Head of Democratic and Legal Services)
Jo Haines (Group Accountant)
David Pope (Committee Administrator)

18.RD.22 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Mike Brown and Mike Tebbutt. It was noted that Cllr Ruth Groome was acting as substitute for Cllr Brown and Cllr Paul Marks was acting as substitute for Cllr Tebbutt.

18.RD.23 MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Research and Development Committee held on 18th September 2018 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

18.RD.24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

18.RD.25 RIGHT TO SPEAK

Mike Annable attended the meeting and requested to speak in relation to Agenda Item A2.

18.RD.26 KETTERING SWIMMING POOL (A2)

Members received a report in relation to Kettering Swimming Pool that sought to do the following:

- To provide an update in regard to planned capital investment of £40,000 for essential investment to the plant room of the swimming pool
- To obtain Member approval for a planned programme of refurbishment to the swimming pool changing rooms
- That should the above refurbishment be agreed, a recommendation be made to the Executive Committee to allocate an additional sum of £100,000 in the draft capital programme for 2019/20 to allow for delivery of the programme
- That a recommendation be made to the Executive Committee in respect of disbanding the Swimming Pool Task and Finish Group

Mike Annable addressed the Committee on behalf of Kettering Amateur Swimming Club and stated that the additional funding for refurbishment was welcomed but the option to disband the Task and Finish Group should be rejected. He noted that the group had failed to achieve its own Terms of Reference even though a relatively low bar of achievement had been set and he would prefer to see renewed endeavour in completing the work.

Cllr Groome echoed the comments of the speaker and stated her disappointment with the lack of activity connected with the Task and Finish Group. Given local government reorganisation there should be a clear vision provided to any new authority of what Kettering wished to achieve and any possible scheme should be properly costed.

Cllr Scrimshaw also stated his displeasure that the Task and Finish Group had not undertaken the work expected of it since its formation. He considered that disbanding the group would be an admission of a lack of imagination and ambition and a clear indicator that the Council did not wish to provide additional swimming facilities. Had the work been undertaken it could have advised and informed any decision on a new facility made by a future unitary authority.

Cllr Titcombe queried where the finance would come from to pay for any new facility and also questioned whether the town had a suitable location for such a facility.

Cllr Marks noted the forthcoming local government reorganisation and suggested that continuation of the Task and Finish Group would provide false hope for such a facility when KBC would no longer exist as an entity in under a year.

The meeting heard that work was being undertaken as part of a review of existing local plans that took into account sports facilities in the local area. This work would feed into any future local plans for North

Northamptonshire.

Following discussion it was

RESOLVED that the Research and Development Committee:

- i) Noted the planned £40,000 investment to the plant room of the swimming pool in the 2019/20 capital programme;
- ii) Agreed to a planned programme of refurbishment to the swimming pool changing rooms;
- iii) Recommended to the Executive Committee that an additional sum of £100,000 be allocated in the draft capital programme for 2019/20 to enable the programme of refurbishment to be delivered; and
- iv) Recommended to the Executive Committee that the Swimming Pool Task and Finish Group be disbanded.

18.RD.27 KETTERING TOWN CENTRE DELIVERY PLAN 2018-2025 (A2)

An update was supplied to the meeting of the progress of the Town Centre Delivery Plan 2018-2025. The meeting noted that copies of the plan were available on the Council's website.

It was heard that during 2017/18 the Council had come to the end of the Suite 16 programme for the town centre and since that point there had been significant changes to shopping habits and patterns altering the faces of High Streets across the country.

A Town Centre Conference had been held in September 2017 to engage stakeholders and take forward their views as part of a draft Town Centre Delivery Plan. This plan had been submitted to the Executive Committee in May 2018 for approval.

It was noted that since that point there had been considerable change to the town centre with a number of big national stores vacating, although the town's food offer and night time economy was holding up well.

It was acknowledged that there was a need for partnership working to successfully take the town centre forward, with engagement from local businesses, community sector and other agencies required. Clarity on KBC's role was provided, with the meeting noting that KBC did not own town centre retail units and did not set Business Rates levels and there

was a need to be realistic in terms of timings, costs and responsibilities associated with the delivery plan.

It was considered that the town centre needed to be repurposed to provide an offer that included a community hub or civic heart as well as incorporating areas for health and wellbeing, housing, education, arts, entertainment and culture in addition to retail. Kettering already had a good niche offer and it was hope to promote this further.

Town centre areas of progress were detailed as follows:

- KBC-owned Sheerness House was close to being tenanted for two of its floors, with Public Services staff due to occupy the bottom two floors as a result of their move from the current London Road site.
- Traffic remodelling on Eskdail Street had made a significant difference to town centre traffic flow
- There was a plan to look at commercial feasibility of the Gallery, Library and Museum alongside Friends of the Gallery.
- KBC owned the majority of the former police station and Magistrates' Court site on London Road and had plans for potential development of the site that were currently being worked
- KBC also had possession of the former County Court building on Dryland Street and work could be undertaken to help make The Yards more accessible
- The recently approved Seats on Streets Order would make it easier for eating places in the town to put seats on the pavements without having to complete significant levels of paperwork.

Ongoing action included monthly Clean and Refresh meetings, the Purple Flag renewal process and supporting Kettering markets.

The meeting heard that as part of the latest government budget process, a Future High Street Fund (FHSF) had been announced that sought bids for the following themes as part of a single transformative submission from each interested authority:

- Investment in physical infrastructure
- Acquisition and assembly of land to support new housing, workspace and public realm
- Improvements to transport access, traffic flow and circulation in that area
- Supporting change of use including housing delivery and densification
- Supporting adaptation of the high street in response to changing technology

The Ministry of Housing, Community and Local Government sought expressions of interest by 22nd March, with an announcement of bids to

be taken forward during the summer. Bids needed to be based on an existing plan, with elements of the Town Centre Delivery Plan being worked up to form part of a KBC submission as well as having support from external organisations such as Local Enterprise Partnerships, the private sector, community groups and retailers. Bids required co-funding as a mix of public and private sectors.

The first round of final businesses cases would be expected towards the end of 2019, with final businesses cases submitted in spring 2020. Up to £25 million was available for successful bid, although average bids were expected to range between £5 million and £10 million.

Cllr Scrimshaw was fully supportive of the delivery plan, especially in relation to the FHSF bid and the town centre partnership. It was noted that even if the funding bid were to fail, there would be a lasting legacy of partnership working between local business and the Council. Cllr Scrimshaw formally requested the setting up of a Task and Finish Group that could help inform the Town Centre Delivery Plan process.

RESOLVED that the Committee convene a Task and Finish Group to assist in informing the Town Centre Delivery Plan

18.RD.28 REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS (RIPA) (A3)

The Committee received a report which provided a revised RIPA policy for review and recommendation to Council at its meeting on 27th February.

The meeting heard that since 2012 local authorities had been required to obtain judicial approval prior to using covert surveillance techniques and use of such surveillance was limited to the investigation of crimes attracting a custodial sentence of six months or more. It was noted that in the previous three years no authorisations had been made for covert surveillance under RIPA provisions, despite this the Council was required to maintain a RIPA Policy and monitor potential surveillance activity. The current policy did not incorporate recent legislative changes hence the need for a review of the policy.

It was heard that the revised policy complied with the recommendations of the Investigatory Powers Commissioner following a recent inspection. It was important that good standards were maintained along with a clear rationale behind the use and non-use of the powers.

A recent programme of staff training had been undertaken as per the Commissioner's recommendation and an annual report would be taken to Council in the event of RIPA being used in future.

RESOLVED that the Committee approved the revised RIPA Policy for recommendation to Full Council.

18.RD.29 BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2019/20 AND THE MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

Members received the budget proposals. In addition, a summary of fees and charges was provided to the meeting. It was noted that the only fee increase impacting the budget was a charge relating to the crematorium.

The Head of Resources and Group Accountant attended the meeting to answer member's questions.

Members of the Committee submitted comments as follows:-

Item / Issue	Summary of Response Given
<p>Local government reorganisation; paragraph 3.5 of the budget book taken to the Executive Committee talks about additional funding needing to come from reserves on top of the £500,000 already approved. Which pot will that come from?</p> <p><i>(Cllr Mick Scrimshaw – Leader of the Opposition)</i></p>	<p>A report went to Council in August and approved £500,000 of earmarked reserves to fund part of the transition. PWC have undertaken high level costings of what the transition and transformation costs might be, this work is ongoing and there will be a report to Council in due course.</p> <p><i>(Officer Response)</i></p>
<p>Total staff wages, the original budget for 2018/19 was £15.5 million, this year we are looking at spending £16.3 million. Next year it looks to be £18.3 million, £2.8 million above the original budget for last year, a 17% rise in total. Why is that and what jobs are being created as a result?</p> <p><i>(Cllr Mick Scrimshaw – Leader of the Opposition)</i></p>	<p>Staff costs have increased significantly, largely as a result of taking on the shared Street Scene Service with Corby. We are the employing organisation and have taken on around 90 additional staff to provide that service. You will recall that the shared service is generating savings of £110,000 which is reflected in the overall efficiencies for 2019/20. Corby Borough Council will be charged for their contribution to the shared service.</p> <p><i>(Officer Response)</i></p>
<p>Parking Services; net income for 2019/20 is set to be £332,000, £30,000 less than the current year. There is an intention to spend more on staff and services, which I assume relates to extra residential parking schemes that come with extra income. What is the net cost of residential parking? Shouldn't scrutiny be scrutinising its effectiveness?</p> <p><i>(Cllr Mick Scrimshaw – Leader of the Opposition)</i></p>	<p>There has been a reduction in parking income of £12,000 between the original budget and revised budget for the current year. For 2019/20 we are modelling the budget on the original 2018/19 budget. There have been further changes around staffing costs, a part of that is due to the increase in the number of wardens.</p> <p><i>(Officer Response)</i></p>
<p>It is our duty as a scrutiny committee to pass judgement on the budget before us to inform the Executive's final recommendations. For scrutiny to perform its legal role this committee has to step up and I do not feel it is doing that.</p> <p><i>(Cllr Mick Scrimshaw – Leader of the Opposition)</i></p>	<p>We have a well-established budget setting process at this organisation. The way we deal with the process is relatively simplistic, with in-year monitoring reports being taken to the Executive on a monthly basis, any variances are used to inform the Medium Term Financial Strategy. Savings in 2019/20 have been identified in full as are the means for delivery, and this is a strategy we have used for a good</p>

	<p>number of years. The benefit to this is the ability to see early delivery of savings in advance of the forthcoming year and this is evidenced by our track record of delivering balanced budgets year on year.</p> <p>(Officer Response)</p>
--	--

18.RD.30 WORK PROGRAMME 2018/19 (A6)

The work programme was noted with the addition of the Terms of Reference and work programme for the Task and Finish Group convened as a result of the Kettering Town Centre Delivery Plan agenda item.

(The meeting started at 7.00pm and ended at 8:17pm)

Signed:

(Chair)

DJP