

BOROUGH OF KETTERING

RURAL FORUM

Meeting held: 3rd October 2019

at Pytchley Village Hall

Present:

Borough Councillors

Councillor Jim Hakewill (Chair)
Councillor Mark Rowley

County Councillor

Councillor Victoria Perry

Parish Councillors

Councillor Richard Barnwell (Cransley and Mawsley)
Councillor Hilary Bull (Broughton)
Councillor Gary Hague (Braybrooke)
Councillor Brenda Hargreave (Pytchley)
Councillor Peter Hooton (Rushton)
Councillor John Lillie (Brampton Ash)
Councillor Alan Lodge (Pytchley)
Councillor Frances Pope (Thorpe Malsor)
Councillor Robin Shrive (Broughton)
Councillor Bruce Squires (Stoke Albany)

Also Present:

Brendan Coleman (Kettering Borough Council)
Simon Richardson (Kettering Borough Council)
Hazel Webb (Kettering Borough Council)
Sgt Rob Offord (Northamptonshire Police)
Sgt Sam Dobbs (Northamptonshire Police)
Graham Lawman (Shire Community Services)
Anne Ireson (Forum Administrator –KBC)

19.RF.19

APOLOGIES

Action

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Chris Smith-Haynes (NCC), Councillor David Howes (KBC) and Councillors Fay Foster and Andy Macredie (Pytchley), James Woolsey and Paul Wharin (Warkton), Nick Richards (Wilbarston) and David Watson (Geddington, Newton and Little Oakley).

19.RF.20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Richard Barnwell and Frances Pope declared personal interests in Item 6 on the agenda as sheep farmers in the Borough.

19.RF.21 MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 18th July 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

19.RF.22 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

19.RF.14: Planning Training

It was noted that the planned questionnaire would be sent out in early Spring 2020 and the draft shared with Councillors Bull, Barnwell and Lodge before circulation.

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It was **AGREED** that an information item be included on the agenda for the next meeting comprising of a one-page summary of mandatory planning training for borough councillors sitting on the Planning Committee.

Agendas

It was reported that some parish councillors had not received paper copies or email notifications of the meeting and late change of venue. Members were advised that communications were sent out via Clerks and that paper copies posted a week before the meeting date.

19.RF.23 POLICE STATISTICS AND STOCK THEFTS/SLAUGHTER

Police Statistics

The Police Statistics for the year to 2nd September 2019 were presented and the following matters highlighted:-

- Parking Issues had been raised across the Borough. However parking was due to be decriminalised in the future.
- Antisocial behaviour had been reported in Broughton and culprits identified through CCTV
- The Facebook Page was due to be launched soon, with proactive engagement with members of the public,

although crimes could not be reported through social media.

- Residential burglaries – an update would be sent through by email.
- Advice was available from Crime Prevention Advisers (contact Sgt Offord for details).
- An update on staff changes in Northamptonshire Police was given.
- A Rural Matters newsletter was available and due to be sent out next month (contact Sgt Offord to be added to the mailing list).
- A new policing model was due to be launched. Responsibility for this area was Superintendent Dennis Murray and Chief Inspector Adam Ward.

During debate members of the Forum welcomed the new, smarter way of working and hoped the changes would improve detection rates and police statistics.

It was noted that a police operation had taken place to evict travellers from Great Oxenden.

Stock Thefts/Slaughter

The Chair introduced Sgt Sam Dobbs to members of the Forum.

Sgt Dobbs reported that a large-scale operation, entitled "Operation Stock" had been launched following the theft and slaughter of sheep in Northamptonshire in July, with animals being killed and professional butchered in fields.

An overview of police activity in respect of Operation Stock was given and the Forum was told that, to date, there were no witnesses to crimes or information on markets for the meat. The Commissioner had funded additional dedicated resources and all avenues were being explored and investigated.

Although Northamptonshire had been targeted initially, crimes were now being reported in Warwickshire, Leicestershire and Yorkshire. 150 signs had been put up, farmers contacted through the National Farmers' Union and a meeting held in Thornby, where between 130-150 farmers had attended.

Farmers and members of the public were urged to ring 999 quoting "Operation Stock" if suspicious activity was seen or detected on CCTV or dashcams.

The crimes had attracted media attention and now had a national profile. Other crimes had been detected through the increased police presence in the rural area and night shifts.

Farmers were now looking into technology to monitor stock and protect fields, and the use of ANPR was proving to be useful.

Sgt Dobbs then explained how the Police intended to move forward with a new policing model and more proactive rural policing, which would be supported by the Rural Forum continuing to work with the police.

Farmers could obtain further signs and notices if required by contacting the team.

Discussion was held on difficulties associated with reporting exact locations in rural areas, due to fields not having postcodes. However, it was noted that the "What3Words" App was free to download and would give three words to convey to emergency services the exact location of the caller. However, it was acknowledged that it would also be useful to collate information on field ownership, and that Parishes could help in this respect. Additionally, Kettering Borough Council had access to the Land Registry and could assist police in an emergency. Northamptonshire Police also held a database of field ownership where known.

Debate was held on security measures that could be employed by residents in remote rural areas. The forum was advised of the Northants Crimestoppers Launch on 10th October at Chapel Brampton.

In conclusion to the debate, the Chair thanked Sgt Sam Dobbs for his attendance and all police officers involved in Operation Stock for their work.

General Policing Issues

The question of neighbourhood disputes was raised. It was suggested that this problem was getting worse, with people not being aware of their responsibilities towards their neighbours. It was noted that Housing Associations did issue such information to prospective tenants, although it was felt Parish Councils could also have a role and be more proactive in advising new tenants in their communities.

Parish Councils were urged to notify their Police Liaison Representatives to Danny Moody at NCALC.

19.RF.24 HOSPITAL CAR SCHEME

The Chair introduced Graham Lawman, Chairman of Shire Community Services, to the meeting.

Graham Lawman addressed the Forum, explaining the background to Shire Community Services which was established in 1973 to address social isolation amongst older people.

All volunteers were DBS checked and had appropriate insurance. The service would take anyone who had a medical appointment of any kind, not only to Kettering General Hospital but further afield, too. The service would also take people to visit their partner/spouse in hospital.

Bookings needed to be made the day before the journey was required. A small joining fee was payable half-yearly, plus 45p per mile, untaxed, plus £1 administration fee. Volunteers would also wait with clients and provide company for them during appointments.

The service was available to residents in Kettering and Wellingborough areas, including villages/towns in both Boroughs.

The service also ran the Wellybus Service in Wellingborough, which provided wheelchair accessible minibuses, trips to day centres, excursions and shopping trips. The service was door-to-door with volunteers helping to carry shopping into the house if required. This service was free to bus pass holders and was funded through concessionary fares and a small NCC grant. People who did not have a bus pass were required to pay a charge for the journey based on mileage.

It was hoped to secure funding for another minibus in the future, and pump-priming was being sought, some of which could be through parishes.

Leaflets were circulated at the meeting, and it was **AGREED** that the information be sent to all parish councils in Kettering Borough.

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Graham Lawman was thanked for his attendance.

19.RF.25 CONTINUATION PAST 9.00 PM

RESOLVED that the meeting continue past 9.00 pm until all business on the agenda had concluded.

19.RF.26 HEALTH AND WELLBEING FESTIVAL FEEDBACK

Hazel Webb of Kettering Borough Council attended the meeting

and delivered a short presentation on the Health and Wellbeing Festival, which took place on 22nd and 23rd June 2019 at Northampton Road Recreation Ground and Boughton House.

The Rural Forum was invited to become involved in planning for the 2020 Festival on how to facilitate activities in the rural area.

It was **AGREED** that an item be placed on the agenda of the Rural Forum to be held in April 2020.

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19.RF.27 GYPSY AND TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION
ASSESSMENT (GTAA)

Simon Richardson of Kettering Borough Council attended the meeting and gave a summary of a report that had been considered by the Planning Policy Committee on 10th September 2019, and which, together with the GTAA, was available on the Kettering Borough Council website.

A key change was that families that ceased to travel permanently no longer fell under the definition of a traveller. If such families did not meet the definition, their needs would be met through general housing policies.

Work on the GTAA had been undertaken by consultants, ORS, which was a national company. An outcome for the period 2018-2013 was that there was a need for 24 pitches for families that met the planning definition, plus 24 pitches for those who did not meet the definition.

The Council was considering several options, namely:-

- Site intensification through reconfiguration of pitches
- Site extensions, exploring potential for extension into another adjacent area of land
- Delivering unimplemented sites – those granted planning permission but pitches not made available (extant planning permissions)
- New site allocation – separated into a local planning document
- Strategic working – Kettering Borough had the highest figures for need across North Northamptonshire, and there may be potential to identify alternative locations to address need
- Regularising sites occupied by non-gypsy families
- Greater depth interviews with those families that no longer travel and recognising how their needs could be met

Work would focus on policies, applications that come forward and the criteria in core policies in consideration of applications. Any enforcement element would be around those pitches occupied by non-gypsy families. It was noted that the Council had now appointed an Enforcement Officer, who was committing time to enforcement around gypsies and travellers.

During debate, the Forum queried as to whether there was a vision of a good gypsy and traveller site. In response, it was noted that the Core Spatial Strategy contained criteria, a critical element of which was accessibility to sites with services as well as good landscaping. It was also considered important that a site was not in an isolated location and was situated within its environment without harming the appearance of the area.

Members noted that good sites would be more readily accepted by both settled and travelling communities. However, it could be that a mix of solutions may be required when identifying the scale and location of sites coming forward, as would a more in-depth understanding of the needs of the families, which could help reduce the figures. It was felt there was a large gap between policy and the rigor with which planning applications were considered, given the pressure for a planning application for a site to be approved.

The view was expressed that it was important to have robust policies, with solid requirements for sites, which would help drive up the quality of those sites to have good services and be fit for purpose. Another important consideration was felt to be management of gypsy/traveller sites, because good sites tended to be those that were managed well.

Debate then ensued on individual sites in specific rural areas, including issues of land ownership and enforcement.

In conclusion to the debate, it was agreed that the point regarding occupation of sites by non-gypsy families would be strengthened by adding words to the effect that the Council were "seeking to tackle sites that were in decline to raise standards", and it was noted that the consultants could help with this. It was suggested that the consultants might be willing to talk to Rural Forum members whose parishes contained both legal and illegal sites.

Simon Richardson was thanked for his attendance.

It was **Agreed** that Simon Richardson would look into inviting representatives from Parish Councils directly related to gypsy and traveller sites to meet with the consultants (ORS) to discuss

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the work they were undertaking and how we could work to ensure that existing sites were improved and new sites not only properly planned for, but delivered to that plan, too.

19.RF.28 PUBLIC SECTOR REFORM

Brendan Coleman gave an update on progress in relation to Public Sector Reform.

It was **AGREED** to circulate a summary of progress by email to all parish councils.

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19.RF.29 NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE FUNDING DAY 2019

A report on the North Northamptonshire Funding Day 2019, which was due to take place on 17th October, was circulated with the agenda and noted for information.

19.RF.30 FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

30th January 2020

- Budget proposals for 2020/21
- Police Statistics
- Community Governance Review
- Rural Homelessness
- Planning Committee Training Summary (for information)

April meeting

- Health and Wellbeing Conference 2020

A suggestion was put forward that more frequent meetings of the Rural Forum should be held due to the need to continue meetings after 9.00 pm in order to consider all business on the agenda.

(The meeting started at 7.00 pm and ended at 9.48 pm)

Signed
Chair