

BOROUGH OF KETTERING

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Meeting held: 4th December 2019

Present: Councillor Russell Roberts (Chair)
Councillors Lloyd Bunday, Mark Dearing, David Howes,
Ian Jelley, Mark Rowley and Lesley Thurland.

Also Present Councillors Maggie Don, Anne Lee and Mick Scrimshaw,

19.EX.38 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Scott Edwards.

19.EX.39 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor David Howes declared a personal interest in Item 10 on the agenda as a resident living close to Kettering Town Centre.

19.EX.40 MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 13th November 2019 be approved and signed as a correct record.

19.EX.41 WORK PROGRAMME

The Council's draft work programme to be published on 17th December 2019 was noted.

19.EX.42 KETTERING TOWN CENTRE – HIGH STREETS HERITAGE ACTION ZONE PROGRAMME DESIGN

A report was submitted which updated members on the progress

of the second stage application for Kettering High Streets Heritage Action Zone, outlined the anticipated funding for the four-year programme and sought confirmation of the next steps and governance process required.

Councillor Mick Scrimshaw, Councillor Anne Lee and five members of the public addressed the Committee in respect of the report.

Cllr Scrimshaw welcomed the scheme and investment it brought to Kettering Town Centre. He requested details of how the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group would be supported and when details of the Stage 2 submission would be available. He also requested information on which specialist groups would provide support and sought assurances on the use of the council reserves. He asked that consultation during both initial sessions and later in the process be maximized.

Councillor Anne Lee also welcomed the proposals, requesting that the use of social media and the internet be used to support the initial consultation events on 5th and 7th December. She suggested that the Civic Society be contacted and asked to contribute to the consultation and sought information on the date for the proposed conference.

Alison Holland, Emily Fedorowycz, Jamie Wildman, Zoe Martin and Simon Cox addressed the Committee, making the following points:-

- Any proposals should be linked to climate change, particularly by promoting good transport options, such as cycling and walking, with cycle racks and a plan of cycle routes being provided
- There were links with the outcomes of the recent Task and Finish Group work which should be made clear and some outstanding material from that group which was not yet published;
- Historic England guidelines should be published
- More clarity was required as to the form, timing and purpose of the consultation process, in particular regarding the High Street Hero Trail branding and that the initial testing of ideas, through on street events on the 5th and 7th December could be seen as the only consultation work underway.
- Online polls were a good way of engaging younger people; additionally, all local groups, including smaller and minority groups, should be invited to the next meeting of the Committee
- The inclusion of murals and artwork would make the town centre more appealing to a modern audience.
- Communication was felt to be ineffective and needed to be improved

- The council should explore the use of empty buildings in the town centre for community uses, such as facilities for the homeless and multi-generational hubs

Members noted that the Council would continue to work with Historic England to ensure the Council met the requirements for the Programme Design up until the submission date of 20th December and the figures and costings in the report were therefore only indicative at this stage. Funding for consultant and specialist support services not available in-house had been included in the budget for the scheme. A report to the Executive Committee in January 2020 would include the final submission document, excluding any commercially sensitive information. A Community Engagement Plan would be developed in detail over the coming months, with details available early in 2020.

Consultation events planned for 5th and 7th December were aimed at engaging people attending events at Kettering Market Place and in the town centre in order to test ideas for future community engagement. Following these two initial events, a Community Engagement Plan would be developed, with a Conference planned to take place in late January 2020.

Stakeholders had been contacted by email through the second stage process and asked for ideas and comments, which would contribute to and build on information already gathered as well as future consultation.

Members particularly noted that there had been only a very short timescale from publication of the guidance until the deadline for submissions. Guidance was also specific, with a requirement that the map cover only the historic area of the town. The parameters of the scheme and the possibility of engaging with other policy objectives were constrained by those guidelines and no commitments could be made at this stage which went beyond those HE guidelines.

Once the physical aspect and buildings had been confirmed, a local consortium would run events alongside the scheme. The plan and submission focused on broad headings, capital and physical improvements and was not about activities.

The High Street Hero Trail initiative was a newly developed concept and would be tested with Kettering Town Centre Youth Partnership and children from St Mary's School to ensure it was being pitched at the right level. It was aimed at engaging the younger generation and gathering their views on how they wanted to shape the town centre. This would then be launched as part of the community engagement plan and consulted on more widely next year.

Members noted that the Guidance from Historic England, published in October 2019, was listed as a background paper to the submitted report, with a link to document given. The deadline for the submission had not been set by the Borough Council. All stakeholders that had submitted letters of support had been previously contacted by email, including the Kettering Town Centre Partnership and Youth Partnership, explaining the next stage of the bid, giving a link to the map and the guidance published by Historic England in October. The cultural programme would be dealt with separately and would provide further opportunities for community engagement.

The Kettering Town Centre Task and Finish Group recommendations had been published at the last meeting of the Committee on 13th November and were available on the Council's website for members of the public to download. The Economic Development Manager was due to attend the next meeting of the Kettering Town Centre Partnership to present a detailed report on the survey, in particular on Question 18 which asked for any additional comments.

During debate on the report, members of the Executive felt that there had been a misunderstanding regarding consultation, and it was important to note that the scheme was a four-year programme with funding from Historic England, the Council and building owners being required to finance the town centre improvements.

Members felt that the scheme represented an excellent use of the Council's capital and revenue budgets, with £2m drawing in £4m of investment in the town centre, but it would be important to emphasise that the money was not for purchasing buildings in the town centre, but rather to improve existing buildings to an architectural heritage standard.

The opportunity to convert spaces above commercial buildings to quality residential units was also welcomed.

In concluding the debate, members congratulated officers on the report and thanked them for the work carried out in connection with the submission in a very short timescale.

RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the submission and governance approach for the submission of Stage 2 – Programme Design for Kettering Town Centre to the High Street Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) Fund be noted;
- (ii) the indicative funding for the HAZ Stage 2

submission be endorsed; and

- (iii) officers continue to work with Historic England on forming a Stage 2 submission and submit capital and revenue budget proposals to Full Council for approval.

19.EX.43 NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPER STRATEGY 2019 – 2024

A report was submitted which sought the approval of the Executive Committee to the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy for North Northamptonshire 2019-2024.

Councillor Mick Scrimshaw addressed the Committee, welcoming the report and strategy and commending the work done by all four councils in North Northamptonshire, suggesting that the same approach could be replicated for other joint strategies. He sought information on a breakdown of affordable housing figures since 2010 and clarification on the definition of the proportion available for social renting.

It was noted that over the last 10 years the number of social rented homes (50% of market rent) that were built had decreased with affordable rent properties (up to 80% of market rent) increasing as a proportion of new build properties.

Emily Fedorowycz addressed the Committee, welcoming the report and strategy. She advised members that Kettering Winter Fair would be fund-raising for Safe until Daylight, looking to support mental health when transitioning from street homeless to temporary accommodation. She suggested that there were links to the heritage fund, and space in empty buildings in the town centre could be used to provide space for rough sleepers and homeless people.

It was noted that the Council recognised the links between mental health and homelessness, in particular regarding those people living on the street. Funding from the government had enabled an outreach worker to be employed through Accommodation Concern. The rough sleeper count in November was four, down from eight counted in September.

Members commended the report and welcomed the joint working across North Northamptonshire Authorities to produce the Strategy.

RESOLVED that the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy for North Northamptonshire 2019-2024 be

approved.

19.EX.44 ACQUISITION OF WELLINGTON HOUSE

A report was submitted which sought approval in principle to acquire Wellington House so that it could provide premises for a preventative homelessness service for vulnerable adults and a permanent night shelter.

Councillor Mick Scrimshaw addressed the Committee, welcoming the report. He sought assurances that if there was insufficient capacity within voluntary sector organisations to increase the offer, the Council would take a more active approach, even if this involved a financial cost.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Communications indicated that if additional funding was required to support services provided by the voluntary sector in Wellington House this would be looked at and brought back to the Committee if required.

The Committee welcomed the report and work carried out by officers in connection with the acquisition of Wellington House.

RESOLVED that the principle of acquiring the Wellington House premises for a supported housing project for single vulnerable people with mental health support needs and a permanent night shelter be endorsed, subject to a satisfactory business case and an amendment to the capital programme.

(The meeting started at 6.30 pm and ended at 7.45 pm)

Signed
Chair

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