

**BOROUGH OF KETTERING**

**RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

**Meeting held: 28<sup>th</sup> January 2020**

**Present:-** Councillor Ash Davies (Chair)  
Councillors Duncan Bain, Jim Hakewill, Jenny Henson, Mick Scrimshaw, Mike Tebbutt and Greg Titcombe

**Also Present:-** Martin Hammond (Executive Director)  
Mark Dickenson (Head of Resources)  
John Conway (Head of Housing)  
Rochelle Mathieson (Head of Commercial & Economic Development)  
Dean Mitchell (Group Accountant)  
David Pope (Committee Administrator)

**19.RD.24      ELECTION OF CHAIR**

It was reported that Councillor Duncan Bain had stepped down from the position of Chair of the Committee and members thanked him for his service.

Councillor Bain nominated and Councillor Titcombe seconded that Councillor Ash Davies be elected as Chair of the Committee.

**RESOLVED** that Councillor Ash Davies be elected as Chair of the Research and Development Committee

**19.RD.25      APOLOGIES**

None

**19.RD.26      MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING TO BE APPROVED AS A CORRECT AND SIGNED BY THE CHAIR**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Research and Development Committee held on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**19.RD.27 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Greg Titcombe declared a personal interest in Item A2.

**19.RD.28 ANY RESPONSES OF THE EXECUTIVE TO REPORTS OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEES, TO BE CONSIDERED WHERE APPROPRIATE**

Members were provided with feedback in relation to the purchase of Wellington House. Members noted that at its December meeting, the Executive Committee had provided approval to the Council to seek to acquire the premises. Since that point, negotiations had been undertaken with Home Group on the terms of the lease, with valuation and building surveyors instructed to undertake work in relation to the premises. In addition, voluntary sector organisations involved in homelessness had been consulted to see whether they would be interested in partnership working with KBC. Staffing structures and job specifications relating to the operation of the premises had also been prepared.

The meeting noted the intention to complete the purchase of the building by the end of the current financial year with an aim to open the premises by Autumn 2020.

**19.RD.29 BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2020/21 AND PREPARING FOR THE MEDIUM TERM (A1)**

Members received the budget proposals with the Head of Resources and Group Accountant attending the meeting to answer member's questions and to provide a supplementary presentation that detailed:-

- The budget consultation timetable
- The composition of the General Fund (£60.7m), HRA (£15.4m) and Capital Programme (£39.2m) budgets that totalled £115.3m
- Main service pressures and risks (recycling, homelessness, local government grant funding)
- Four key funding streams and forecast changes to these (Fair Funding Review, Business Rates Retention, Council Tax and New Homes Bonus)

Members of the Committee submitted comments as follows:-

Item / Issue	Summary of Response Given
<p>Will the Fair Funding Review impact on 2020/21 budgets, or is it a more “medium-term” consideration?</p> <p><b>(Cllr Mick Scrimshaw)</b></p>	<p>The Fair Funding Review will not impact the 2020/2021 budget, it will take effect from 2021/2022</p> <p><b>(Officer Response)</b></p>
<p>What is happening regarding public consultation on the budget? Are there any leaflets available, a page on website or a way people can send in their comments?</p> <p><b>(Cllr Mick Scrimshaw)</b></p>	<p>The public were invited to attend the Budget Consultation meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> January. There is reference to that meeting on the Council’s website and if anyone wishes to submit comments they can be emailed through to the Head of Resources.</p> <p><b>(Officer Response)</b></p>
<p>In relation to the decriminalised parking element of the budget, is it possible to have further information on the breakdown of that budgetary line so we can be confident that decriminalised parking enforcement will pay for itself?</p> <p><b>(Cllr Mick Scrimshaw)</b></p>	<p>A breakdown of those figures can be provided.</p> <p>To arrive at those figures KBC was required to submit a business plan to the county council and then to the Department of Transport to illustrate that it could technically fulfil the requirements of legislation and that the service would not operate as a money-making exercise or as one expecting to make a loss. The business case included county council experiences regarding fee income. We will take a structured approach, but until the service begins, we will not know exact income levels. However, over a period of years it is intended to balance itself.</p> <p><b>(Officer Response)</b></p>
<p>Is there an element or reserve of the budget to top up any dip in revenue from parking tickets?</p> <p><b>(Cllr Jim Hakewill)</b></p>	<p>Should any deficit arise we would look to mitigate this from other existing budgets. There is a contingency budget of £150,000 and if the deficit could not be funded through that we would look to use reserves.</p> <p><b>(Officer Response)</b></p>
<p>The other three authorities that will form part of the North Northants Unitary Authority operate the county council parking enforcement system. What will happen in April 2021 if the three other authorities like their existing system? Have we purchased software systems to issue parking tickets or are we utilising the county council system?</p> <p><b>(Cllr Jim Hakewill)</b></p>	<p>There is no definitive answer regarding disaggregation of parking enforcement yet, those conversations are due to take place. Essentially, the North Northants Unitary Authority will have two systems in place and will have the opportunity to decide which is the more effective over time</p> <p>We have adopted new software that is linked into the county council’s back office providing a certain level of coherence for the unitary authorities after 2021.</p> <p><b>(Officer Response)</b></p>

<p>Does the budget as presented tonight provide for the salaries of the complete number of 17 traffic wardens given that at the 1<sup>st</sup> April, they will not all be in post?</p> <p><b>(Cllr Jim Hakewill)</b></p>	<p>Yes, the budget being proposed is for all 17 members of staff. We will go into the start of the financial year a little light on numbers but expect to be fully staffed during April.</p> <p><b>(Officer Response)</b></p>
<p>Budgetary line PS7/PS8 and income of £1.15m for fees and charges, with £514,000 of that now expected from car park income. We have learned that the Executive Committee will be conducting a review of car parking charges. How has that £514,000 figure been calculated in relation to any possible changes as a result of that review?</p> <p><b>(Cllr Mick Scrimshaw)</b></p>	<p>In terms of arriving at the figure of £514,000, the budget for 2019/20 was £614,000 with in year pressures of £100,000 identified. We have extrapolated those figures forward assuming the same levels of income for 2020/21 as for 2019/20.</p> <p>The budget does not allow for parking income changes at this stage.</p> <p><b>(Officer Response)</b></p>
<p>Page 45 of the Capital Programme; there is a revised budget of £310,000 for land acquisition and pre-contract works at Stamford Road. However, there does not seem to be an amount of money allocated to provide the housing we were looking to build at that location.</p> <p><b>(Cllr Mike Tebbutt)</b></p>	<p>That is correct, we need to go through the viability stage for that site and then bring that scheme back through a separate approval process to bring it into the budget.</p> <p><b>(Officer Response)</b></p>
<p>Page 46 of the Capital Programme has a CCTV element of £50,000. The quality of the imaging collected by our cameras is not usually of evidential quality and does not make use of ANPR. Will this budget of £50,000 correct some of that?</p> <p><b>(Cllr Mike Tebbutt)</b></p>	<p>The £50,000 in the budget is to improve the current CCTV system. It will not have ANPR functionality but will improve the image quality.</p> <p><b>(Officer Response)</b></p>
<p>The replacement IT System with an original £90,000 budget for the current year now shows as £0 for the revised 2019/20 budget. Has the work been completed or is it no longer required?</p> <p><b>(Cllr Mike Tebbutt)</b></p>	<p>The system was planned for Development Services; however, a decision was taken to defer this system.</p> <p><b>(Officer Response)</b></p>
<p>Page 27, budgetary line DL1 in relation to elections, does the cost of a General Election get reimbursed from central government? In 2021 there is £229,000 budgeted for elections. Is this for the PFCC election and how can the budget be so low if it is a Borough-wide election?</p> <p><b>(Cllr Jim Hakewill)</b></p>	<p>The 2019/20 figures reflect the costs associated with a general election and the European elections. General and PFCC elections are not dealt with through the KBC accounts, the Electoral Claims Commission deal directly with the PFCC and the general elections.</p> <p><b>(Officer Response)</b></p>

<p>Page 19, in relation to Development Control, the original budget for 2019/20 was £529,000, revised to £431,000 and for 2020/21 is set at £496,000. These are quite large variances?</p> <p><b>(Cllr Jim Hakewill)</b></p>	<p>This is in relation to income levels as a demand-led service. The original budget had predicted income of £788,000 which is now projected to be £887,000 at the end of this financial year. We have not aligned all of this income to the 2020/21 budget due to the service being demand-led.</p> <p><b>(Officer Response)</b></p>
<p>At what point would the Council's auditors say we are not levying a suitable amount of Council Tax because for the last three years officers have made increase recommendations to the Council leadership?</p> <p><b>(Cllr Jim Hakewill)</b></p>	<p>The auditors issue a Value for Money opinion, but in terms of giving advice and telling the Council it had to raise Council Tax rates, this is not something they would do. This is a political decision.</p> <p><b>(Officer Response)</b></p>
<p>Use of the term efficiencies as part of the budget is misleading as income generation is not an efficiency.</p> <p><b>(Cllr Jim Hakewill)</b></p>	<p>We always tried to identify and clearly present a composition that provides a scale of additional income or a reduction in expenditure. We can, in future, have separate headings that specifically state additional income and reductions in expenditure.</p> <p><b>(Officer Response)</b></p>
<p>Where is the budget for buying properties to progress homelessness issues?</p> <p><b>(Cllr Mick Scrimshaw)</b></p>	<p>It is detailed on Page 46 as Housing and homelessness prevention.</p> <p><b>(Officer Response)</b></p>
<p>The Commercial Investment Strategy has a budget of £20.160 million, that is a very specific figure, are there already investments lined up?</p> <p><b>(Cllr Mick Scrimshaw)</b></p>	<p>The £20 million budget relates to acquisition of new commercial investments, the additional £160,000 is for capital investment at Haydock House following its acquisition.</p> <p><b>(Officer Response)</b></p>
<p>The £150,000 Contingency Fund referred to earlier, will that be different for our final year?</p> <p><b>(Cllr Mick Scrimshaw)</b></p>	<p>There is no difference between the years.</p> <p><b>(Officer Response)</b></p>

Cllr Hakewill requested that a report be brought to the next meeting of the committee in regard to CCTV detailing how the Council might improve the quality, connectivity and ANPR issues.

**RESOLVED**

a) that the comments of the Committee set out above be submitted to the Executive Committee for consideration at its meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> February 2020

b) A report be made to this committee detailing the investment plans for the CCTV system and outlining those matters which would need to be addressed in any more fundamental review of the CCTV systems in North Northamptonshire post 2021.

**19.RD.30**      **KETTERING TOWN CENTRE TASK AND FINISH GROUP – TIMELINE (A2)**

The Committee received a report that provided a draft timeline for the implementation of recommendations made by the Town Centre Task and Finish Group (T&F) and subsequently approved by the Executive Committee.

It was noted that the Executive Committee had, at its meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2019, requested that such a timeline be brought to a future meeting of the Committee. Members were asked to make comments on the suggested timeline prior to its submission to the Executive Committee at its meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> February.

Members heard that a number of recommendations had already been completed or were nearing completion, including a wayfinding system review, match funding being committed as part of the Heritage Action Zone bid and a revised policy for charity and commercial bookings in the town centre.

Cllr Scrimshaw raised the following points in relation to approved recommendations:-

- **B2** – The update provided in the report was national-focussed. The T&F had taken the view that there may be a need to utilise KBC funding for assisting independent start-up businesses. It was requested that this comment be passed back to the Executive Committee.
- **C4** – The update provided did not consider a sport and leisure facility offer in the town centre, focussing as it did more on events.
- **D1** – The response provided was disappointing; the T&F had expected KBC to do more to improve promotion of “good news” stories and to celebrate Kettering's history.
- **H1** – Installation of a footfall counter system by March 2020 reflected the T&F's request and thanks were offered for this update.

- **H2** – The T&F had wanted stronger restrictions in relation to charity and commercial collections in the Town Centre and details of the guiding principles were requested.

Members heard that in relation to recommendation H2, a stringent set of criteria and questions had been created with consideration given as to which bookings would “add value” for the residents of Kettering. This would allow KBC to be more critical regarding which commercial bookings it allowed in the Town Centre.

It was agreed by the Committee that an additional recommendation be added to the resolution of the item as follows:

*“The Committee seeks the Executive Committee’s recognition that there are other towns and villages in the borough that could benefit from a similar review.”*

**RESOLVED**

that:-

- i) The Research and Development Committee endorsed the timeline update report;
- ii) The Research and Development Committee formally agreed the timeline update report be taken to the Executive Committee on 19<sup>th</sup> February; and
- iii) The Committee sought the Executive Committee’s recognition that there are other towns and villages in the borough that could benefit from a similar review

**19.RD.31 PET POLICY (A3)**

Members received a report that sought member approval to recommend to the Executive Committee a new policy on the keeping of pets within Kettering Borough Council tenancies. It was noted that this item had been deferred from the previous meeting of the Committee.

It was heard that the current Council policy of allowing one domestic animal to be kept without having to obtain permission did not adequately address existing challenges such as animal hoarding, intimidation with dogs, cat spraying and barking dogs, all of which could be more easily dealt with by the introduction of a clear and well-enforced policy.

The Council had worked closely with Wood Green Animal Shelters and the Tenants’ Forum to assist in the creation of the new policy. Wood Green had also helped to train housing officers and support pet owners in the Borough.

The new policy was considered to be ambitious, recognising the health benefits of pet ownership but with a focus on the welfare of pets as well as outlining the expected behaviours and responsibilities of tenants with regard to pets. In addition, the policy set out consequences and actions that would be taken should the policy not be adhered to.

Members asked questions in relation to:-

- The number of pets allowed
- Existing pet owners
- Exotic species
- Fostering of pets and pet-related businesses

It was noted that all tenants who currently owned pets would be required to apply for consent. As long as tenants' pets were not causing a nuisance there would be no requirement to remove animals from those over the newly prescribed limits.

Members considered that given the strict controls on pets exercised by both private landlords and housing associations the policy was welcome and reasonable.

**RESOLVED**

That the Research and Development Committee approved the new Pet Policy for recommendation to the Executive Committee.

**19.RD.32 DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY (A4)**

Members received a report that sought member approval to recommend to the Executive Committee a new policy on responding to Domestic Abuse within Kettering Borough Council tenancies. This item had, along with the Pet Policy, been deferred from the previous meeting of the Committee.

Members heard that the Council had signed up to the Chartered Institute of Housing's "Make a Stand" campaign which aimed to raise awareness and provide appropriate responses to victims of domestic abuse.

The main aims of the Domestic Abuse Policy were noted as being:-

- To provide appropriate and effective response to victims
- To enable staff to confidently support victims by taking a victim-centred approach
- To take effective action against perpetrators using legal remedies where appropriate
- To work closely with partner agencies to source effective solutions
- To raise awareness of domestic abuse



It was noted that the policy consolidated a significant level of existing practice, and would hopefully provide victims of domestic abuse with more confidence when approaching the Council.

**RESOLVED** That the Research and Development Committee approved the new Pet Policy for recommendation to the Executive Committee

**19.RD.33 WORK PROGRAMME (A5)**

The Committee suggested the following items for inclusion on the work programme:-

- CCTV update
- Market Development Proposal

*The meeting started at 7.00pm and ended at 9.05pm)*

*Signed.....*

*Chair*

*DJP*