

BOROUGH OF KETTERING

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Meeting held: 18th July 2012

Present: Councillor Roberts (Chair)
Councillors Malin, Wiley, Jelley, Bullock, Bellamy, Zanger,
Lamb and Freer

Also Present: The Mayor, The Deputy Mayor, Bayes, Brown, Bunday,
Corazzo, Derbyshire, Soans, Tebbutt and West.

12.EX.13 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Dearing.

12.EX.14 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Derek Zanger declared a personal interest in Item 10 on the agenda and left the meeting room during discussion on that item.

Councillor Jonathan West declared a personal interest in Item 10 as a member of East Midlands Co-operative Society.

12.EX.15 MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 12th June 2012 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

12.EX.16 FORWARD PLAN AND WORK PROGRAMME

The Forward Plan and Work Programme for the period 15th April to 31st October 2012 was noted.

Councillor Derek Zanger, having declared a personal interest in the following item, left the meeting room during discussion thereon.

Councillor Jonathan West declared a personal interest as a member of East Midlands Co-operative Society.

12.EX.17 VOLUNTARY SECTOR SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS

A report was submitted which considered the Research and Development Committee report of the Voluntary Sector Task and Finish Group and which sought agreement for the future procurement of services from the voluntary sector.

Councillor David Soans addressed the Committee as the Chair of the Task and Finish Group. He thanked those who had contributed to the work of the Group. The report set out the main recommendations as they applied to services provided under service level agreements. The Group had also looked at the Small Grants system, recommending that it be retained, supplemented financially and simplified.

Councillor Soans elaborated on the four grades as contained in the appendix to the report and explained the reasoning behind the recommendations of the Group for the proposed policy changes.

Councillors Tebbutt, West, Corazzo, Brown, Nick Bolton (Groundwork), Dominic McClean, Sally Muldowney, Patricia Dewar and Dr Robin Field addressed the meeting under the Council's Right to Speak Policy, and the following points were made:-

- No cuts to the overall sum of money were to be made under the Council's Triple Zero policy and this was to be commended
- There was a need to grade priorities to ensure the right issues were targeted through SLA grants
- The voluntary sector was crucial to employment, as it often provided an access point into work
- Green issues were important to the Borough and should be supported
- If unused ward initiative funding was added to small grants, it could result in unfairness due to an unequal distribution of funding in the Borough
- The proposed transition funding should be used for

- organisations that needed emergency funding
- There was much local support for the Local Infrastructure Organisation, as it provided face-to-face support for small voluntary organisation that did not have the resources or capacity for expert specialisms
 - Many young people became volunteers
 - A Local Infrastructure Organisation provided a central point of contact and acted as a clearing house for volunteers
 - The work of the Naturalise group in relation to the Ise Valley, which was based at the Green Patch in Kettering, was outlined

In addition to the points made above, the representatives of Groundwork Trust and the voluntary sector advised the Committee of statistics and data in respect of the past performance of the organisation as the local infrastructure organisation.

During debate the members of the Committee made the following points:-

- Kettering Borough Council could not contribute to core funding of organisations, as its grants were project-based
- The Council contributed £1.5m to voluntary organisations when benefits in kind were taken into account
- The grading of priorities and principles outlined in the report underlined what the Council was trying to achieve and represented part of its 'triple zero' strategy
- Changes in the Council's priorities were inevitable as a result of wider legislative, grant and economic changes expected over the next 12-18 months
- A more detailed analysis of the figures contained in the report would be undertaken
- 'Integration into British Society' should be added in the section 'Access and Culture'.

Further discussion was held on the local voluntary sector compact agreement. It was noted that the Borough Council had always complied with the compact, which was now 10 years old. As a part of the process, Equality Impact Assessments would be undertaken prior to detailed specifications being produced. The timetable for the process was outlined and it was noted that decisions on funding would be made in December 2012.

The Committee thanked the Chair and members of the Task and Finish Group for their work.

RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the Research and Development Committee's recommendations be accepted in principle; and
- (ii) the timetable and process for agreeing detailed specifications for each area of activity, and implementing the new Service Level Agreements, as set out in the report, including the carrying out of a full equality impact assessment, be endorsed.

12.EX.18 **ASSET MANAGEMENT – THE HAWTHORNS**

A report was submitted which considered the future of the former Hawthorns Leisure Centre site. The report also sought agreement of a development brief for its future use and determination of associated matters concerning the skateboard park and the current building.

Naj Mistry, Cllr Belinda Humfrey, Dr Robin Field, Paula Holmes, Gil Holmes, Councillor Jonathan West and Councillor Michael Tebbutt addressed the Committee under the Council's Right to Speak Policy and the following points were made:-

- A popular youth group and other young people used the skate park regularly
- 100 people had attended the recent opening following refurbishment of the skate park, which had attracted a major youth grant for the materials
- The provision of a skate park is needed, particularly as more young people would use the park as a result of new build
- It would cost in the region of £200k to replace the skate park and there are no known suitable locations in Desborough
- The police were in favour of the skate park remaining
- 80 young people had paid their annual subscriptions since the end of March 2012 and had showed their commitment by organising litter-picking sessions
- The Council had now closed the car park to the former Hawthorns building, which had caused congestion in surrounding streets
- The recreation area around Tailby Meadow should be extended to other suitable land on the other side of the river
- The local development document stated that entrances to towns should have a green access

- The land was not yet ready for sale, and indicative figures suggested the land would not realise the sum of money mentioned in the report
- Football pitches on the site were still in use and bookings were being taken for next season
- Amenities should be retained in Desborough and enhanced in tandem with the meadows
- There was a need for more housing in the Borough
- The multi-use games area should be retained
- The skate park should be kept under surveillance to prevent damage by vandals

It was reported that a letter had been received by the Council from the Solicitor acting on behalf of Desborough Youth Action Group. It was noted that, subject to conditions being met, the Council was able to terminate the lease under the terms of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954, but must give at least six, but no more than twelve, months' notice of termination.

During debate, the Committee stressed that it wished to provide the best solution for the youth of Desborough, and acknowledged the popularity of the skate park amongst many young people. However, there was a need to balance community benefit with community assets. The decision had already been taken to dispose of the land, and the site was included in the Housing Needs Assessment. Members expressed a wish to work with the skate park operator and Desborough Town Council in order to discuss options for relocation of the skate park. Should notice of termination of the lease be sought, it was felt that a maximum amount of time should be given to the skate park owners, taking into account school holiday periods.

It was noted that there were various ways of bringing the site to market, only one of which involved demolishing the former Hawthorns Leisure Centre. However, costs were likely to escalate rapidly if the building was not demolished, and this was considered to be a poor use of public funds.

Debate was held on issues of access, health and safety during any period of demolition, particularly in relation to the need for safe removal of asbestos from the site. It was agreed that, should demolition occur, advice should be sought from various officers of the Council, in particular Environmental Health and Building Control, prior to any work commencing.

RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the disposal of the former Hawthorns Leisure

Centre site, for residential development, be agreed in accordance with the objectives and terms of the development brief outlined in the report;

- (ii) the existing Hawthorns Leisure Centre building be demolished, and a sum of £70,000 be included in the capital programme to fund this;
- (iii) twelve months' notice to quit the site be given to the current skate park operator, the period of notice to commence in September 2012; and
- (iv) officers be authorised to engage with, and provide advice and assistance to, both Desborough Town Council and the skate park operator about relocation, if they wish to re-provide the facility elsewhere in the Borough.

12.EX.19 MAINTAINING A DURABLE BUDGET – BUDGET POLICY AND MONITORING

A report was submitted which:-

- (a) Provided Members with a reminder of the Council's medium term financial strategy and associated guiding principles.
- (b) Provided members with an update on the draft outturn figures for 2011/12, in relation to:
 - General Fund
 - Housing Revenue Account
 - Capital
 - Treasuring Management
- (c) Illustrated the latest budget model, the delivery of efficiency savings for 2012/13 and the estimated level of budget savings that may be required over the next few years.

A presentation was given by the Acting Head of Finance.

RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the draft out-turn position for 2011/12 for the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account, Capital Programme and Treasury Management be noted;

- (ii) the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy and associated guiding principles be noted;
- (iii) the Capital Programme carry forwards (as outlined in the Appendix to the report) be endorsed; and
- (iv) the current Medium Term Financial Forecast and the progress being made for the delivery of efficiency savings for 2012/13 and future years be noted.

12.EX.20 MAINTAINING A DURABLE BUDGET – THE MEDIUM TERM AND NATIONAL RESOURCE REVIEW

A report was submitted which:-

- (a) provided an update of the Medium Term Financial Strategy;
- (b) discussed the 'zones of unpredictability' and outline the key issues;
- (c) outlined the broad strategic choices in relation to a future scheme for Council Tax Support (and an associated timeline);
- (d) provided an update on the National Review of Business Rates focusing upon the issue of pooling.

A presentation was given by the Deputy Chief Executive. It was noted that a further meeting of the Committee would be required in early August in respect of Council Tax support reform. It was also felt that it was not possible to comment on potential pooling of resources until further information was available.

RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the medium term challenges and issues be noted;
- (ii) the updated Medium Term Financial Strategy be noted;
- (iii) the high level consultation timetable for Council Tax Support reform (as outlined in section 4.11 of the report) be noted; and

- (iv) the approach outlined in Section 4.18 of the report in relation to the Government's Pooling Prospectus be agreed, and the draft guiding principles for pooling (set out in Section 4.19 of the report) be endorsed.

12.EX.21 CONTINUATION OF MEETING BEYOND 10.00 PM

RESOLVED that the meeting continue beyond 10.00 pm.

12.EX.22 TOWN AND PARISH COUNCIL FUNDING – REVIEW

Following a request from the Rural Forum, a report was submitted which reminded Members of the background to the current arrangements; outlined the current system of town and parish council funding; sought clarification on the scope of any review and agreement of any consultation arrangements.

It was noted that Kettering Borough Council was probably the only council in the country which continued to provide ongoing revenue support to town and parish councils through annual grant payments.

Rose Sawford and Councillors West and Tebbutt addressed the meeting under the Council's Right to Speak Policy and made the following points:-

- grant funding by the Borough Council covered operating costs and paid clerks' salaries
- the principle of towns and parishes paying more for services and local assets was wrong
- any new arrangements should be fair to all council tax payers
- consideration of separate arrangements for Kettering Town should be kept separate from any review
- Kettering should have a Town Council
- The Localism Act 2011 brought forward recommendations for development, housing and parishing, although Neighbourhood Plans were not affected by whether an area was parished

During debate Members considered whether to continue with the current system, with adjustments if necessary. However, it was felt that, as the Borough Council appeared to be the only council

in the country to provide revenue grants to town and parish councils, its arrangements should be brought in line with other local authorities. It was also felt that it would be preferable to consult on this broad option, with notice being given to end the current arrangements at the end of 2013/14. It was felt that investigation of special expenses for Kettering Town should not be explored under any review of town and parish council funding.

Members also discussed the potential for parish councils to share administrative costs.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the position in respect of the current grant arrangements be noted;
- (ii) the Executive Committee's preferred option is to cease providing revenue grants to Town and Parish Councils and that this would be effective from the start of the 2014/15 financial year;
- (ii) that the investigation of special expenses for Kettering Town not be explored;
- (iii) the consultation arrangements be agreed as outlined in section 4 of the report.

(The meeting started at 7.00 pm and ended at 10.45 pm)

Signed:
(Chair)

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