

BOROUGH OF KETTERING

MONITORING AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

Meeting held: 16th September 2020

Meeting held virtually

Present: Councillor Anne Lee (Chair)
Councillors Margaret Talbot, Mike Tebbutt, Greg Titcombe and Jonathan West

Also Present: Lisa Hyde (Executive Director)
Rochelle Mathieson (Head of Commercial Development)
John Conway (Head of Housing)
James Wilson (Interim Head of Development Services)
Guy Holloway (Head of Corporate and Cultural Services)
Rob Tompson (Benefits and Business Support Manager)
Carly Hohn (Housing Strategy and Solutions Manager)
Anne Ireson (Committee Administrator)

(Prior to commencement of the meeting the Chair thanked Councillor Jonathan West for chairing the Committee over the last few years)

20.MA.12 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Jenny Henson.

20.MA.13 MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Monitoring and Audit Committee held on 14th July 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

20.MA.14 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Anne Lee declared a personal interest in Item 8G on the agenda as a trustee of Groundwork.

Councillor Mike Tebbutt declared a personal interest in Item 8G on the agenda as a member of Kettering Huxloe Rotary Club and supporter of Marlow House in Desborough.

20.MA.15 CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLAN – UPDATE (8A)

A report was submitted which updated members on the progress that had been made on the actions to be undertaken by this Council to help address Climate Change as set out in October 2019.

It was noted that, due to Covid-19, the update had been delayed. More work was due to be undertaken on climate change impacts arising from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Dez Dell, John Padwick and Emily Fedorowyz addressed the Committee under the Council's Right to Speak Policy.

Points raised and questions asked by the speakers included:

- Clarification of the target year for carbon neutral emissions
- Promotion of climate issues on websites/social media
- Tree planting and guidance for people who wanted to plant trees in the Borough
- Electric vehicle charging points and solar panels
- Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan and Bike Storage
- Recycling projects
- Eco specifications for new developments and eco adaptations for existing buildings
- Green bingo
- A suggestion for a citizens' assembly in Kettering to address climate change issues
- Air quality
- Grass verges and planting of wild flowers
- Green jobs in the Borough
- Walking to school and initiatives such as 'Beat the Street'
- Interactive maps and future consultation

It was agreed that detailed information on the above issues would be given separately to the speakers.

During debate, members welcomed the report, especially in respect of the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan which would make travelling safer for cyclists and pedestrians. The Committee also paid tribute to the amount of work that had been undertaken in delivering the climate change objectives and improvements. The Environmental Services team was congratulated for its initiatives in respect of wild flowers in grass verges and floral displays across the Borough. The success of 'Beat the Street' in 2019 was also acknowledged.

Further debate was held on landscaping schemes as part of new developments, and a standard planning condition to replace dead landscaping as part of a planning approval was noted.

The Committee referred to existing frameworks and the Council's policies in respect of youth engagement, task and finish groups and forums as a way of getting more people involved. It was agreed that wider engagement of all age groups on a topic-focused basis would be explored.

The speakers were thanked for their attendance.

RESOLVED that the update report and progress made in respect of the Council's commitments toward carbon emission reduction and climate change mitigation by 2030 be noted.

(Councillor Mike Tebbutt left the meeting at 4.53 pm)

20.MA.05 KETTERING TOWN CENTRE UPDATE (8B)

A report was submitted which updated members on the activity and recovery of the Town Centre, including reflecting on progress of:-

- (i) the Town Centre Task and Finish Group's recommendations which were approved by the Executive Committee on 19th February, and
- (ii) the Town Centre Delivery Plan 2018-2020

The Head of Commercial Development gave a presentation on key aspects of the report.

John Padwick addressed the Committee under the Council's Right to Speak policy and suggested that, as Kettering was close to London, the town could look at developing business hubs as part of the changing ways of working as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

It was noted that the Station Quarter project would look at, with partners, the development of a masterplan around the existing use of space in the area surrounding the station. The Council would also look at using facilities to utilise pockets of space where people could work and have access to support and advice. The provision of secure cycle storage was raised and it was noted that a facility would shortly be installed within the Heritage Action Zone public realm work, and additionally at the railway station early next year.

Members welcomed the report and inward investment into the town centre and thanked the Head of Commercial Development and her team

for the excellent results. The Committee also thanked members of the Task and Finish Group for their positive work.

RESOLVED that the update as set out in the report be acknowledged.

20.MA.06 KEY UPDATES (8C)

Welfare Reform

A presentation was given by the Benefits and Business Support Manager, which updated members on the following topics.

- Back office benefit provision – IT and remote
- Business support and administration roles
- Budget support – both remote and office-based
- Appointments
- Online contact for Council Tax Support

Information on claims for Council Tax Support and Discretionary Housing Payments was also included in the presentation.

Homelessness

An update and presentation was given by the Housing Strategy and Solutions Manager on the following issues:-

- Trends and the impact of Covid-19
- Work undertaken in relation to getting rough sleepers into accommodation
- Information on Kettering Lettings Plus – a scheme for engagement with private landlords.
- Temporary Accommodation Update

The additional accommodation that would become available in Wellington House was welcomed.

The Committee thanked officers for their work.

20.MA.07 KEY PERFORMANCE INFORMATION BOOKLET (8D)

The Key Performance Information Booklet had been issued separately.

Members acknowledged that Planning performance had been affected by the challenging times as a result of Covid-19.

In respect of Kettering Borough Training, it was noted that the level of contact with young people had necessarily reduced as a result of the pandemic. Outcomes were, however, commended and it was noted that the Council was being creative about how to take forward services.

A request was made for opening times for the Mobility Scheme to be updated on the website.

The figure of 111% for benefits payments was questioned and an explanation given as to why the figure could rise above 100%.

The Head of Corporate and Cultural Services explained to the Committee that the operational and technical challenges of Covid-19 had impacted on data collection for the current booklet. However, the format of some information was being changed to enable it to be viewed on screen. A full suite of data would be submitted to a future meeting.

RESOLVED that the Key Performance Information Booklet be noted.

20.MA.08 WORK PROGRAMME (8E)

The Work Programme for the Monitoring and Audit Committee was submitted for consideration.

RESOLVED that the following items be included in the work programme:-

Meeting – 25th November 2020

- Accounts 2019/20
- ISA 260
- Certification of Grants (KPMG)
- Leisure Update
- Covid-19 Review (dependent on how pandemic progresses)

Meeting - 3rd February 2021

- Finance Closedown documentation
- Climate Change Update

(The meeting started at 4.00pm and ended at 5.39 pm)

Signed
Chair

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