

BOROUGH OF KETTERING

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

13th January 2021

(Meeting held virtually)

Present:-

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

20.EX.35 APOLOGIES

None.

20.EX.36 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Mark Rowley declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in the addendum to item 9 on the agenda (Covid-19: Additional Restrictions Grant – Further Measures) and indicated that he would leave the Zoom meeting during discussion and voting on this item.

20.EX.37 MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 9th December 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair subject to it being noted that Councillor Scott Edwards had given apologies for absence.

20.EX.38 URGENT BUSINESS

The Chair stated that he had accepted an item of urgent business under the provisions of Section 100B 4(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, because the Council needed to urgently establish a hardship fund for local independent businesses affected by the recent national lockdown, utilising additional and existing government monies.

20.EX.39 ISSUES REFERRED FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

None.

20.EX.40 ISSUES REFERRED FROM FORUMS

None.

21.EX.41 ISSUES REFERRED FROM COUNCIL

None.

20.EX.42 THE COUNCIL'S DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME

The draft Work Programme to be published on 20th January 2021 was noted, having been previously circulated by email.

20.EX.43 KETTERING BOROUGH COUNCIL BUDGET UPDATE – JANUARY 2021

A report was submitted which:

- (a) provided an update to the budget monitoring figures that were presented to the previous Executive Committee; and
- (b) in line with best practice, provided a mid-year update on Treasuring Management; and

The Portfolio Holder for Finance highlighted aspects of the report, asking members to note that negative variances in the Housing Revenue Account were due to increased void levels and an increase in Right to Buy sales. He also drew members' attention to variances due to COVID-19 and commended good practice in the authority in relation to sound fiscal sense and the payment of invoices upon receipt.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the budget position for 2020/21 be noted; and
- (ii) the Treasury Management performance for the period 1st April -30th November 2020 be noted.

(Having declared a personal pecuniary interest in the following item, Councillor Mark Rowley left the meeting during discussion and voting thereon)

20.EX.44

KBC BUDGET UPDATE – JANUARY 2021
COVID ADDITIONAL RESTRICTIONS GRANT – FURTHER
MEASURES

A report was submitted and accepted as an item of urgent business by the Chair. The report sought approval to establish a hardship fund for local independent businesses affected by the recent national lockdown, utilising additional and existing government monies.

Councillor Anne Lee addressed the Committee. Whilst expressing support for the report, Councillor Lee expressed concern that business leaders had not yet been informed of the availability of the grants either on social media or by direct contact.

In response to Councillor Lee's comments, members noted that the information available on social media and websites was in relation to the Tier 2, 3 and 4 periods and previous Lockdown Grants. Future discretionary Additional Restrictions Grants and grants through the hardship fund, which were the subject of the report under consideration, had not yet been publicised and were not currently open for applications. The Council was still awaiting information on amounts of money available for allocation and guidance from the Department for Communities and Local Government, so it was not yet possible to design the scheme. Additionally, it was hoped to align the hardship fund with similar funds in Corby, Wellingborough and East Northants. The additional grants that would be available would be publicised once the scheme had been designed. The Council would then write to every local business that had received a grant in the past or had been refused a grant, and would also publicise availability on social media and websites.

In discussion, members welcomed the report, noting that separate hardship funds had been previously established to help individual people in need, and that the hardship fund under consideration was only in relation to COVID-19. Discussions were underway to help define hardship criteria and eligibility to support local businesses impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic'

In terms of the take-up of grants, the total Additional Restrictions Grant spend to date related to the four-week period of Lockdown in November 2020 and had supported businesses not eligible for other grants. Grants were advertised through an open application process. The number of applications received had not been significantly lower than expected and was in line with other local authorities. In addition to the hardship fund, the report under consideration also covered current six-week period of Lockdown, and possible ongoing restrictions thereafter.

Members noted that money allocated for future schemes and future economic development support would also need to be available to the new authority as it also covered the next financial year (2021/22).

In summing up the debate, the Portfolio Holder for Finance expressed gratitude to officers for their work and commended their commitment to quickly getting grants out to businesses during the pandemic. He also commended the practice of paying suppliers on receipt of an invoice rather than on terms.

RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the same discretionary grant scheme that applied for the November period of national restrictions be agreed; and
- (ii) delegated authority be granted to the Head of Commercial & Economic Development, in consultation with the Finance Portfolio Holder, to design and implement a hardship fund for those locally owned businesses who are not sufficiently supported by the existing funding streams

(Councillor Mark Rowley rejoined the meeting)

20.EX.45 THE FORMER GRANGE METHODIST CHURCH SITE – CONSTRUCTION OF EIGHT HOUSES AND BUNGALOWS,

A report was submitted which

- (i) noted the progress made on The Grange Methodist Church housing development site; and
- (ii) noted the financial envelope of the scheme and proposed that this project be included in the draft North Northants Housing Revenue Account (HRA) capital budget for 2021/22.

In introducing the report, the Head of Housing advised members that work had now commenced on the Albert Street site and was shortly to commence at Scott Road.

The Mayor addressed the meeting and welcomed the proposal. He commended the Council and the Housing team for bringing the first three sites for new Council housing to fruition, commenting that the scheme would improve quality of life and well-being for local people. The Mayor sought reassurance that problems with the early tendering process experienced on the first two sites would not be experienced on the Grange Methodist Church site. It was noted that the first stage of the tendering process had already been completed without problems.

During debate, members particularly welcomed the inclusion of two larger three/four bedroomed wheelchair accessible houses with facilities for disabled household members, it being noted that there were currently over 30 households on the Keyways list for this type of property. It was

suggested that housing of this type should be brought forward through Section 106 agreements for large developments in future.

It was noted that work on the site should commence in late-Spring and be completed by the end of 2021. The scheme was commended in bringing well-needed Council housing to the town using a brownfield site.

It was suggested that the Methodist movement in Kettering should be acknowledged in some way through the scheme.

The Head of Housing and his team were thanked for their work.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the progress made on The Grange Methodist Church housing development site be noted; and
- (ii) the financial envelope of the scheme be noted and this project be included in the draft North Northants HRA capital budget for 2021/22.

20.EX.46 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

RESOLVED that the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting on the grounds that it involved items of business included the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by paragraphs 1-7 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended)

20.EX.47 SHOPMOBILITY, WADCROFT, KETTERING

A report was submitted which considered granting Evans Hearing and Health Limited a lease of Shopmobility, Wadcroft, Kettering at an undervalue rent.

The Mayor addressed the meeting, welcoming the report. In response to a question relating to service novation, it was noted that Evans Hearing and Health Limited had taken over the previous business and was continuing to provide the same level of service to the Council under a Service Level Agreement. The unitary authority would take over the property and the lease from 1st April.

RESOLVED that Evans Hearing and Health Limited be granted a lease commencing 5th December 2018 to 31st March 2023 at the amount of rent and on the terms outlined in the report.

20.EX.48 LAND OFF ROTHWELL ROAD, SOUTH DESBOROUGH

A report was submitted which updated members of progress and reported on the outcome of the second marketing exercise concerning land at South Desborough, and which sought approval to enter into a disposal contract with the preferred bidder to develop the site for housing.

The Mayor addressed the meeting and asked if a flood risk assessment had been carried out. It was noted that a flood risk assessment would form part of the planning application process.

RESOLVED that the Head of Commercial and Economic Development, in collaboration with the Chief Legal Officer, be delegated authority to:-

- (a) accept Developer A as the preferred bidder;
- (b) progress and finalise disposal of associated land by initiating Heads of Terms; and
- (c) notify the Shadow Executive.

(The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 6.52 pm)

Signed
Chair

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