**BOROUGH OF KETTERING**

**RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

**Meeting held: 24th January 2012**

**Present:** Councillor Paul Marks (Chair)

 Councillors Maurice Bayes, Ellie Manns, Cliff Moreton,

 David Soans and Jonathan West.

**11.RD.22 APOLOGIES**

 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Duncan Bain and Councillor Paul Corazzo. Councillor Manns was acting as substitute for Councillor Corazzo.

**11.RD.23 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Research and Development Committee held on 19th October 2011 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**11.RD.24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

 None

**11.RD.25 URGENT ITEMS**

 Members noted that a request had been received in respect of the consideration of an item in respect of animal welfare in the Borough. It was considered that there was an element of urgency in relation to this matter, and that a report should initially be forwarded to the member concerned so that the matter could be dealt with expeditiously by him, and then brought to the next meeting of this Committee so that members could be aware of steps taken to deal with the issue.

At this stage, it was further noted that the issues raised by this Committee’s Finance Task and Finish Group in relation to the Council’s Budgetary process had been accepted by the Executive and that all proposals made continued to be considered and worked on by officers in the build up of the budget and service plans for 2012/13.

**11.RD.26 BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2012/13 AND PREPARING FOR THE MEDIUM TERM (A1)**

In accordance with the Council Constitution, the Committee considered the Council’s draft budget proposals with a view to submitting any comments back to the Executive for consideration at its meeting on 15th February 2012. A copy of the Executive budget report from its meeting of 18th January 2012 had been circulated to Members of the Committee to assist in their consideration of this item, and a key issues summary from that report was provided, which referred to the current year, the forthcoming year, 2013/14 and beyond, and other relevant items for consideration.

In order to assist them with this matter, members received a presentation that supplemented the accompanying report.

When considering the report, members raised the following issues:

* The Council’s Housing stock should benefit from any increase in monies available as a result of the new Housing Revenue Fund arrangements
* The potential impact of a worsening global economic climate on local government finance and services should be borne in mind
* There is only a finite amount of savings that the Council can make over the medium term before there is an impact on capacity
* The arrangements for Enhancement and Improvements provision for future years in the Capital Programme were noted in terms of how both large schemes and smaller schemes were funded. It was considered important that these arrangements were kept in place throughout the medium term as projected in the report
* Members noted the arrangements relating to the change in the way that services relating to tourism were provided, and their effect on the budget
* Members supported the ‘Triple Zero’ strategy outlined in the report, although it was considered that these were ambitious goals that needed much hard work to achieve
* Staff should be commended for their role in the Council reaching its current budgetary position and the retention of service levels
* Members commented that the external factors such as inflation could impact on the Council’s budget over the medium term period and that this could impact on future years’ budgets

**RESOLVED** that the above matters be referred to the Council’s Executive for consideration at its meeting on 15th February 2012.

**11.RD.26 PUBLIC TOILETS (A2)**

A report was submitted that provided the committee with an update on public toilet provision within Kettering Borough as result of the decision taken by the Council’s Executive Committee in February 2011 to terminate the existing contract at that time for leased toilet facilities in the Borough. In their consideration of this item, members requested that consideration be given to the capitalisation of the costs for terminating the leases of the existing facilities, with a view to making a revenue saving.

Members were supportive of the scheme but requested that negotiations with providers continued to increase provision in a second phase. It was also requested that proper signage and publicity should be provided so that the public was aware of the location of facilities.

 **RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

**11.RD.27 COUNTY COUNCIL ELECTORAL REVIEW (A3)**

A report was submitted that notified members of the above review, being carried out by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) and requested them to give consideration to establishing a way forward in relation to making a submission regarding the configuration of the NCC electoral divisions within the area covered by Kettering Borough Council. Members received details of progress with the review so far, notably the suggestion that the County Council’s membership should be reduced from 73 to 57, and the impact that would have on the District Council areas in the County. Members received specific details on how the review would impact on representation for the Kettering Borough area. It was noted that more details on the proposed configuration of the new electoral divisions should be available in February 2012.

Members considered that the following matters should be taken into consideration by the County Council in its review:

* Community cohesion should be achieved
* Equality of representation as far as possible should be achieved
* It should be clear to electors who their representative is and what area they are situated in for electoral purposes
* There should be local input into the naming of the electoral divisions
* There should be a genuine attempt to avoid confusion between electoral areas belonging to different types of Councils

 **RESOLVED** that the above comments be forwarded to the County

 Council.

**11.RD.28 WORK PROGRAMME (A4)**

 The Committee’s work programme was submitted for consideration. The following items would be added to those already listed for consideration at the next meeting.

* Animal Welfare Policy
* Update on the Voluntary Sector Task and Finish Group
* NCC Electoral Review (if further detail available)

It was also noted that the report relating to the update on byelaws was not yet ready as guidance from central government was awaited on this subject. It was also noted that the current status of the Northamptonshire Councils Charter would be investigated to establish whether it was necessary for a report to be submitted.

**RESOLVED** that the above be noted.

 *(The meeting started at 7.00 pm and ended at 9.00pm)*

Signed­: …………………………………………………….

(Chair)

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