**BOROUGH OF KETTERING**

**DRAFTY**

**RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

**Meeting held: 21st March 2012**

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

Councillors Duncan Bain, Maurice Bayes, Paul Corazzo, Jan Smith, David Soans and Jonathan West.

**11.RD.29 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Cliff Moreton and Duncan Bain. Councillor Smith was acting as substitute for Councillor Moreton.

**11.RD.30 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Research and Development Committee held on 24th January 2012 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**11.RD.31 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

**11.RD.32 ANIMAL WELFARE POLICY (A3)**

A report was submitted that informed members of the Committee of the work undertaken by Kettering Borough Council regarding animal welfare, notably

* Stray Dog Services
* Dog Control Orders
* Membership of the County Animal Welfare Officers Group; and
* Enforcement Activities
* Action to stop illegal grazing of horses on Council-owned land

Members noted that the Councils stray dog services have been recognised though the RSPCA Animal Welfare Footprint Awards, achieving the Gold Footprint in 2010, and 2011. The Award recognises stray dog services that have mechanisms and policies embedding dog welfare, responsible dog ownership, and staff training of their care.

Davina Chester, a member of the public, was in attendance at the meeting and addressed the Committee under the Council’s ‘Right to Speak’ policy. She asked members to review the Council’s existing policy in respect of identifying dead animals through micro-chips. It is currently only undertaken for dogs. It should be used for other animals especially cats, in order that they could be re-united with their owners when either lost, injured or dead. She also requested that the Council’s non-statutory role in relation to dog-on-dog attacks could be enhanced so that additional support could be provided for the owners of dogs who had been the victims of such attacks.

Members considered the above issues in conjunction with the existing policy as contained in the submitted report. They agreed that further consideration needed to be given to the matters raised by Mrs Chester. It was moved that a ‘Task and Finish’ Group be established to consider the matter, however this was withdrawn and it was agreed that a further report be submitted to the next meeting with input from the relevant service units, Environmental Health and Environmental Care. Further consideration of Task and Finish approach would be given at the next meeting if it necessary when appropriate terms of reference for any group established could be considered . Therefore, it was

**RESOLVED** that :

1. A further report on issues that could be dealt with by the Environmental Health and Environmental Care Service Units relating to Animal Welfare be submitted to the next meeting of this Committee;

**11.RD.33 RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE INDEPENDENT REVIEW PANEL INTO MEMBERS’ ALLOWANCES (A1)**

Members received a report that requested them to consider the recommendations of the Independent Review Panel (IRP) on Members’ Allowances and to refer their comments to the Executive Committee for consideration on the 4th April 2012, before Council makes a final decision on 25th April. Members also received details of calculation errors in the report that required adjustment. The IRP considered the following matters:-

* The context of the review
* Basic Allowances
* Special Responsibility Allowances
* Mayoral Allowances
* Eligibility for the Local Government Pension Scheme
* The Ward Initiatives Fund
* Travel and Other Allowances
* Childcare and Dependent Carer's Allowances

In its report, the IRP made reference to the likely impact of the Localism Act 2011 on the work of ward councillors. It recommended that a further review of Members' Allowances be undertaken in two years' time when the impacts of the Act will have become more open to assessment.

All members and senior officers were notified of the date when the review panel was to meet and invited to make oral or written representations. A number of members took advantage of this.

In considering this report, members of the committee commended the IRP on its work. There was discussion and support relating to the recommendations on the following items:

* The proposal is respect of the Mayors Allowance
* The recommendations relating to members being able to access the Local Government Pension Scheme which it was believed would encourage more people to stand for election

Some concern was expressed that members would potentially be accepting an increase in their allowances while a pay freeze was in place for staff. It was noted, however, that some staff still benefited from incremental pay awards subject to satisfactory performance.

Members of the Committee were requested to consider if recommendations 7.5 (based on objectives) or 7.6 (based on a standstill budget l) was preferable to them. It was

**RESOLVED** that the IRP report in its entirety be passed on to the Council’s Executive with the recommendation that the recommendations set out in paragraph 7.5 of the report be adopted..

(Note: For the Motion 3, Against 0, Not Voting 3)

**11.RD.34 VERBAL UPDATE ON THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR TASK AND**

**FINISH GROUP (A2)**

A verbal update report was submitted for members of the Committee in respect of the work to date of the Voluntary Sector Task and Finish Group. Members were informed that 3 meetings had been held, where service providers and groups benefiting from the Council’s grants had been interviewed. However, as yet no meeting had been held with the County Council, which was considered vital in providing a broader understanding of this matter. However, it was considered that progress was being made.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

**11.RD.35 COUNTY COUNCIL ELECTORAL REVIEW (A4)**

A report was submitted that notified members of the proposals of the County Council in relation to the new electoral divisions for the Kettering area, and requested them to consider submitting a response to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE).

The County Council had requested informal comments to be submitted to them by 12th March 2012. However, the Council’s meeting schedule did not offer any opportunity for the proposals to be considered by its members prior to that date.

In view of that, it was suggested that members might wish to comment on the proposals directly to LGBCE as part of the formal consultation process, although if the County Council chose to make any amendments to their proposals before they submitted them to LGBCE, then it might make elements of any comments from this Council less relevant. Nevertheless, this did represent the only window of opportunity to comment on the proposals to the Commission. It was suggested therefore that the response sent to LGBCE clearly made the point about its timing.

Members considered that the County Council proposal met the numerical requirements of the review criteria, but did not always meet the community identity and effective and convenient local government criteria, particularly relating to Proposed Division 4. It was considered that the alternative proposal submitted made more sense in those respects. This proposal was supported by members, who also supported the suggestions received for naming the 8 divisions as follows:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Division No. | Proposed Name | Rationale |
| 1 | Burton & Broughton | The two largest communities in the Division. |
| 2 | Rothwell & Mawsley | The two largest communities in the Division. |
| 3 | Desborough | The largest community in the Division |
| 4 | Ise | The Ise Brook runs through all of this Division |
| 5 | Wicksteed | Wicksteed Park is a landmark in this area |
| 6 | Clover Hill | The name of an historic geographical feature in this Division. |
| 7 | Northall | The name of a bridge in this Division and also a main thoroughfare. |
| 8 | Windmill | The name of an historic feature in this Division and also a main thoroughfare. |

**RESOLVED** that the above comments relating to an alternative proposal for the electoral divisions in the Kettering Borough area and their suggested names, be forwarded to the County Council and the Local Government Boundary Committee for England..

**11.RD.36 PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY REVIEW (A5)**

Members were requested to formulate a response to the consultation relating to the Boundary Commission for England’s (BCE) proposals on the review of Parliamentary Constituencies in the United Kingdom with regard to comments from other individuals and organisations in respect of the BCE’s original proposals.

The consultation relating to this part of the BCE’s process had ended on 5th December 2012. Consequently, on 6th March 2012, the BCE published all the comments on its proposals. Members now had the opportunity for their comments on the responses received to be submitted to BCE by 3rd April 2012.

It was noted that there were comparatively few comments by individuals and non-political organisations on the proposals for Kettering. However, members focused on those made by Political Groups, a summary of which were attached as an Appendix to the submitted report.

Having considered the report, it was

**RESOLVED**  that members re-iterate their support for the original proposal by BCE.

**11.RD.37 WORK PROGRAMME (A6)**

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 Review
* Welfare Reforms and Council Tax Localisation Schemes
* The impact of the Health and Social Care Act 2012 on Kettering Borough Council (possibly a presentation to either this Committee or another ‘forum’.)

**RESOLVED** that the above be noted.

*(The meeting started at 7.00 pm and ended at 8.43pm)*

Signed­: …………………………………………………….

(Chair)

*iw*