BOROUGH OF KETTERING

at a meeting of the Council of the Borough of Kettering held at the Kettering Conference Centre, Thurston Drive, Kettering on 20th April 2016

Present:

Councillor June Derbyshire (Mayor)
" Scott Edwards (Deputy Mayor)
" Linda Adams
" Duncan Bain
" Steve Bellamy
" Michael Brown
" Lloyd Bunday
" James Burton
" Ashley Davies
" Mark Dearing
" Maggie Don
" Ruth Groome
" James Hakewill
" Jenny Henson
" Philip Hollobone
" David Howes
" Ian Jelley

Councillor Anne Lee
" Shirley Lynch
" Mary Malin
" Clark Mitchell
" Cliff Moreton
" Russell Roberts
" Mark Rowley
" Mick Scrimshaw
" David Soans
" Margaret Talbot
" Michael Tebbutt
" Lesley Thurland
" Greg Titcombe
" Keli Watts
" Jonathan West
" Derek Zanger

15.C.74 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mills, Smith and Sumpter.

15.C.75 MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 1st March 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.
15.C.76 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Hakewill declared a personal interest in Item 9 on the agenda, indicating that he would leave the meeting room during discussion and voting on Motion (i).

Councillor Adams declared a personal interest in Item 9 (i) on the agenda as an employee of a company owned by Northamptonshire County Council.

The Chief Executive declared a personal interest in item 8 on the agenda indicating that officer colleagues affected by parts of the report would leave the meeting room during discussion thereon.

15.C.77 MAYOR’S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor informed Council of the death of Councillor Reg Barby on Sunday, 17th April 2016. Reg was a member of Barton Seagrave Parish Council and also sat on the A6 Towns Forum and the East Kettering Liaison Forum. The Mayor advised that she had sent a letter of condolence to Reg’s wife, Lesley, and his family on behalf of members of Kettering Borough Council.

A minute’s silence was held in memory of Reg Barby.

15.C.78 LEADER’S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader of the Council added his own condolences to those expressed by the Mayor in memory of Reg Barby and added that he would be missed by colleagues on Barton Seagrave Parish Council and Kettering Borough Council.

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic Delivery informed Council of a recent Kettering Borough Council success in being shortlisted in the LGC ‘Campaign of the Year’ category, adding that this was testament to the hard work and dedication of officers. The Council had also recently secured a Chartermark award for Customer Services, exceeding the standard in four additional categories.
15.C.79 REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

None.

15.C.80 RIGHT TO SPEAK POLICY

Mr Dave Lowry indicated that he wished to address Council under the Right to Speak Policy in respect of Item 9 on the agenda.

15.C.81 NOMINATION OF DEPUTY MAYOR 2016/17

RESOLVED that Councillor Alan Mills be nominated as Deputy Mayor for 2016/17.

15.C.82 FLEXIBLE RESOURCING STRATEGY

A report was submitted which updated Council on progress in implementing the flexible resourcing strategy agreed by Council in April 2015 and which sought decisions on:-

- Governance and Member Development arrangements
- Changes to meeting arrangements
- Asset Management arrangements and the creation of an Asset Management Board

The report also noted progress on senior officers’ structural arrangements.

An amendment to Recommendation 10.2 of the report was circulated around the table. The amendment was proposed by Councillor Malin and seconded by Councillor Burton as follows:-

“Delete paragraph (a) in the recommendation.

Re-number paragraph (b) as paragraph (a) and add the words “so that no meeting shall continue beyond 9.00 pm”.”
Add a new paragraph (b) – allow any committee, sub-committee, forum or working party to resolve to commence its meetings at a time earlier than 7.00 pm if that is its wish.

Add a new paragraph (c) - for quasi-judicial meetings where it appears that the business may take longer than two hours to transact, the meeting shall start at a time to ensure it is finished no later than 9.00 pm.”

In the ensuing debate, the opportunity to consider the timing of meetings was welcomed. However, members felt that it remained important for meetings to remain accessible. It was therefore suggested that each Committee should consider its own start time for meetings.

The Chair of the Rural Forum addressed Council, adding that it would be important for members of the public attending meetings to be confident of regular start times, particularly in respect of Planning meetings. The Chair of the Planning Committee advised Council that she would seek the views of members of the Committee before the start of the new Municipal Year.

Debate was held on staff resourcing, and the recruitment and selection process was commended, despite the failure to appoint to the post of Head of Commercial and Economic Development. It was noted that alternative temporary arrangements to cover this work were being implemented as an interim measure.

(Martin Hammond and Graham Soulsby left the meeting room during discussion on the following item)

Members agreed that last year's induction programme had been a success with professionally-delivered sessions and practical help for new councillors. Senior officers and staff in Democratic Services were thanked for their work in this respect. It was felt that, to expand on knowledge and skills gained in the induction period, it would be useful for members to now receive training on improving the effectiveness of committees and forums, including guidance on both chairing and participating in meetings.

The new Staff Merit Award Scheme was commended and thanks were extended to staff who had been involved in developing the new scheme. It was felt that the scheme improved upon the current Customer Service staff awards, ensuring that all staff could be rewarded for their hard work.

The options for an interim asset management body were considered as follows:-

(Council No. 4)
20.4.16
• A committee of the Executive
• An advisory committee under S102 (4) of the Local Government Act 1972
• A working party
• An asset management board

In discussion, members indicated support for an asset management board, which it was considered would be the preferred approach given that it would consist of a cross-party group of members which could consider investment opportunities and form a view on each submission made. Given the nature of the work, the meetings would not need to be subject to normal committee formalities in respect of notice and agendas. It would be a non-decision-making body and of benefit for it to operate on informal basis. The Board could then be tasked with making recommendations on purchase of assets or the performance of the asset optimisation and acquisition strategy. It was pointed out that such a body would be in line with a previous Council decision regarding future self-sufficiency and a primary focus on securing a commercial return on investments wherever possible. As a large number of such discussions were likely to be commercially sensitive, it would be necessary for an Asset Management Board to meet in private.

Some debate was held on current arrangements during meetings for debate on exempt items under discussion. It was noted that the Chair of a committee would continue to decide whether or not other councillors would be invited to remain in the room while exempt matters were debated. However, the Leader of the Council assured members that there would always be a presumption in favour of transparency and that an indication would be given prior to meetings of the Executive if the nature of the subject matter under discussion necessitated that debate be held in private with the exclusion of other members.

In conclusion to the debate on this item, members made positive reference to the extent of cross-party work recently undertaken, which meant that the Council had been able to progress a large number of projects and achievements in a short period of time for the benefit of the Borough's residents.

*(Voting on the Amendment: Unanimous)*

**RESOLVED** that the following proposals recommended by the Flexible Resources Working Group be approved:-

*(Council No. 5)*

20.4.16
Professional Leadership Arrangements

(a) that Council endorse the progress in this area; and

(b) Council note the strategy to continue to make progress whilst staying responsive to the developing picture in respect of public service delivery in the area.

(Voting: For 31; Not Voting 2)

Formal Committee Meeting Arrangements

That a new programme of meetings for 2016/17 be scheduled to:-

(a) have a two hour guillotine, so that no meeting shall continue beyond 9.00 pm;

(b) allow any committee, sub-committee, forum or working party to resolve to commence its meetings at a time earlier than 7.00 pm if that is its wish; and

(c) for Licensing and Planning Committee meetings where it appears that the business may take longer than two hours to transact, the meeting shall start at a time to ensure it is finished no later than 9.00 pm.

(Voting: Unanimous)

Asset Optimisation and Acquisition

(a) An Asset Management Board be set up as a cross party group of members to consider investment opportunities;

(b) the Terms of Reference of the Asset Management Board as set out at Appendix 1 be approved;

(c) responsibility be delegated to the S151 officer to implement the instructions of the Asset Management Board; and
(d) any changes to the Council’s constitution which are necessary to embrace the above be made.

(Voting: Unanimous)

**Member Development**

That a training session for all members on governance and Council procedures and rules of debate be organised and delivered early in the new administrative year for 2016/17.

(Voting: Unanimous)

**Leadership Training**

That a formal programme of leadership training and development be developed by senior political leaders and professional leaders with a view to commencement from June 2016.

(Voting: Unanimous)

(Martin Hammond and Graham Soulsby rejoined the meeting)

(Councillor Hakewill left the meeting room prior to discussion on this item)

**15.C.83 UNITARY AUTHORITY**

It was Proposed by Councillor Russell Roberts and Seconded by Councillor Jonathan West that:-

“This Council recognises and supports South Northamptonshire District Council’s bold ambition to form part of a greater Oxfordshire cluster of unitary authorities.

This Council recognises that people and places are more important than institutions and accordingly asks all Councils in Northamptonshire to recognise that the existing Council boundaries are not appropriate for future unitaries.

This Council supports a proposal that it should explore the creation of a unitary local government structure for the rest of Northamptonshire, and that work to evaluate the most effective
options should be commissioned, ideally in conjunction with all other Councils in the county, to examine what would be most effective in terms of:-

1. Community Geographies
2. Economic Geographies
3. Comprehensiveness of proposals and their coherence with other neighbouring plans
4. The opportunities for deep service integration
5. Value for money – in particular new approaches to service delivery which provide less hand-offs and institutional boundaries
6. Partner and stakeholder support/commitment to options.
7. The track record of joint working
8. The cultural alignment between constituent authorities
9. The fiscal and performance profile of constituent authorities
10. Key service challenges
11. Ease of migration to any new arrangements

This Council currently believes a North Northamptonshire wide unitary will likely best meet these criteria, but will work with other councils on options which serve the rest of Northamptonshire and which ensure transparent, accessible, integrated and effective service delivery and local leadership.”

During debate on the motion members expressed concern about the long-term sustainability of Northamptonshire County Council, particularly with regard to its well-documented problematic financial situation. Initial work in conjunction with other local authorities in North Northamptonshire was welcomed by Council. The point was made that new arrangements for local government in Northamptonshire could be mandatory in the future and it would be better in the long-term for residents if local authorities in North Northamptonshire took the initiative now.

Members were unanimous in their view that there was a need for more joined-up services across Northamptonshire and it was hoped that the Council could work with the County Council in this respect without compromising its other options. Kettering Borough Council was well regarded by the government as a forward-thinking local authority and was in a good position to support growth in the area whilst making local services more effective. Members expressed the view that it would be important to ensure that the Borough Council maintained its excellence in delivery of services in any new arrangements that might be implemented in the future. In particular, there would be a need to work collaboratively on the following important issues for the Borough:-

- The Weekley/Warkton Avenue
- Dualling of A43 between Northampton and Kettering

(Council No. 8)
20.4.16
RESOLVED

that this Council recognises and supports South Northamptonshire District Council’s bold ambition to form part of a greater Oxfordshire cluster of unitary authorities.

This Council recognises that people and places are more important than institutions and accordingly asks all Councils in Northamptonshire to recognise that the existing Council boundaries are not appropriate for future unitaries.

This Council supports a proposal that it should explore the creation of a unitary local government structure for the rest of Northamptonshire, and that work to evaluate the most effective options should be commissioned, ideally in conjunction with all other Councils in the county, to examine what would be most effective in terms of:-

1. Community Geographies
2. Economic Geographies
3. Comprehensiveness of proposals and their coherence with other neighbouring plans
4. The opportunities for deep service integration
5. Value for money – in particular new approaches to service delivery which provide less hand-offs and institutional boundaries
6. Partner and stakeholder support/commitment to options.
7. The track record of joint working
8. The cultural alignment between constituent authorities
9. The fiscal and performance profile of constituent authorities
10. Key service challenges
11. Ease of migration to any new arrangements

This Council currently believes a North Northamptonshire wide unitary will likely best meet these criteria, but will work with other councils on options which serve the rest of Northamptonshire and which ensure

(Council No. 9)
20.4.16
transparent, accessible, integrated and effective service delivery and local leadership.

(Voting: Unanimous)

15.C.84 INVOLVEMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN LOCAL DEMOCRACY

It was proposed by Councillor Jonathan West and seconded by Councillor Maggie Don that:-

“This Council sets up a Task and Finish Group which will be tasked to gather evidence from schools and young people in order to make recommendations on how this council can better facilitate the engagement of younger people in our Borough with local democratic decision making.”

In discussion members felt that, although the Youth Council was carrying out some good work in deciding on and making grants to local organisations, there was a need to carry out a piece of work to look at young people’s involvement in local decision-making with a view to increasing wider engagement. Options were put forward as follows:-

- Working with schools and academies
- Civic engagement through the Mayor
- Targeting head teachers and school councils

RESOLVED that this Council sets up a Task and Finish Group which will be tasked to gather evidence from schools and young people in order to make recommendations on how this council can better facilitate the engagement of younger people in our Borough with local democratic decision making.

(Voting: Unanimous)

15.C.85 PARKING IN COUNCIL CAR PARKS

It was proposed by Councillor Clark Mitchell and seconded by Councillor Mick Scrimshaw that:-
"We as a council agree that the practice of providing free parking passes to the elected members of Kettering Borough Council be suspended with immediate effect."

Mr Dave Lowry addressed Council under the Council's Right to Speak policy regarding the need to have sufficient parking spaces for visitors to the town, in particular referring to the Council's Wadcroft car park.

During debate on the motion, members expressed the view that there were wider implications to consider and there was a need to look at the issue more broadly.

As this was considered to be a matter which was more related to members' allowances than parking charges, it was felt that there would be a need to take into account the representational role of members in consideration of the motion. The Independent Review Panel on Members' Allowances was due to meet later this year, and members were advised they could make representations on this issue at that time.

It was pointed out that the pass provided only covered members on official business. Members were required to pay for a parking ticket when using Council car parks for personal visits to the town. It was noted that if members incurred parking charges when visiting other towns on official business, the cost could be reclaimed in accordance with the current Scheme of Members' Allowances.

It was noted that Members did not have to request a parking pass, and members holding a pass could always pay the parking fee if they so wished.

In support of the motion, the view was expressed that there was a need to show sympathy to residents at a time of austerity, and car parking charges should be covered by members' basic and special responsibility allowances.

(Voting: For 7; Against 23; Not Voting 2)

The Motion was therefore lost.

15.C.86 WADCROFT CAR PARK

Councillor Mick Scrimshaw asked the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration the following question:-
"Who took the decision to transfer 26 car parking places in the Wadcroft public car park to Royal Mail?"

The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration answered as follows:-

"The Council has not transferred car parking places to the Royal Mail – they are renting these spaces from the Council under an annual arrangement. The decision was taken by the Strategic Management Team in the light of the need to generate more income, and in the context that a total of 41 new car parking spaces have been or are to be created across our car parking stock this year."

Councillor Scrimshaw asked the following supplementary question:-

"If over 10% of the additional revenue from the additional spaces is being given over, how much revenue are we receiving from Royal Mail?"

The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration replied as follows:-

"Yes, we do make revenue from the spaces, but the amount made is commercially sensitive."

(The meeting started at 7.00 pm and ended at 8.50 pm)

Signed ........................................
The Mayor