

Meeting of BLTC 04 April 2017

Reports to Council

Borough Council Matters of Interest Reports

Cllr R. Groome

On 20th March I attended a very helpful Member Training Session on working with our customers - partnership working with partners - Accommodation Concern, Citizens' Advice, Foodbank, Police etc, and the Kettering Futures Partnership.

3rd April (last night) I attended a training session on 'Fixing our broken housing market' - work with the street homeless, changes in demand for housing, the new Keyways website and the Housing White Paper.

As a Borough Councillor many of the enquiries I receive are about housing, so I found this session particularly helpful.

Cllr J. Smith

Helping our customers with issues around housing and debt utilising our officers to work with them and educate them to help pay bills in a timeous manner. There are a plethora of partners who are able to assist residents across the Borough all details of which are included in the Kettering Futures Partnership. Within the group of members are a variety of charities who are grant funded to deliver services that work in symbiosis with many offered by the council but adding assistance from companies such as Mind .

Through collaborative working with partners we have been enabled to empower people to help steer the journey they wish to follow to achieve their goals and are supported by officers to undertake the tasks to support them with everyday living.

I have also attended the formal budget setting process which delivered a balanced budget with no increase in KBC council tax and no cuts to services with full support grants being issued.

I undertook planning training which clarifies a plethora of planning intricacies in terms of regulations developers must adhere to deliver fit for purpose homes for the future.

We are undertaking a review of swimming pool facilities and will look to analyse the results through our officers and a task group.

I have also talked to a number of residents concerning planning issues.

County Council Matters of Interest Report (Cllr C. Groome)

I asked three questions at Full Council and here are the pre-prepared answers. Interestingly the underpowered lamps were upgraded on the day of the Council meeting and some potholes were filled. I am allowed to ask a supplementary. I found out that they are switching to the blitzing approach to pothole repairs which we advocated.

Date: Thursday 16 March 2017

Agenda Item No: 10

Questions submitted under rule 10.2

11. Question to Councillor Ian Morris, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Transport, Highways & the Environment from Councillor Christopher Groome:

There is anecdotal evidence that the number and size of potholes in our roads and pavements has risen markedly in recent months and is accompanied by a growing inability of the Council's contractor to fill them within a reasonable time scale and to the required specification. In particular the welcome move away from temporary repairs to more permanent reinstatement of the surface seems to have gone into reverse as staff wrestle with bigger workloads and a limited budget.

Could the Cabinet Member share with Council the statistics over the last 3 years for the County as a whole and by sub-area for potholes reported, potholes fixed temporarily or permanently and budget spent? What proportion of the repair cost is attributable to traffic management? Can savings be made by streamlining the 'Inspection' system? Would it be more efficient to blitz an area for a day at a time? Can more be done to counter poor reinstatement by statutory undertakers and to recoup the cost?

It is well understood that roads everywhere are vulnerable in wintery weather as heavy rain, frost and snow all act to make surfaces more susceptible to deterioration and during the winter months potholes always increase in volume. Whilst the aim is to always carryout permanent repairs where possible, the numbers of temporary repairs versus permanent repairs will be subject to some fluctuation particularly where there are short-term spikes in demand or where there is an increase in defects that require immediate attention.

Over the last three months Dec 2016 – February 2107 the numbers of defects has increased by over 60% in total compared to the same period last year. In order to complete repairs in the stated policy timescales and ensure the roads and footways remain safe, this has resulted in a short term increase in the numbers of temporary repairs undertake. This is as an interim measure only and permanent repairs will be planned and undertaken at a later stage.

As requested the three year (full year) data is provided in the table below. We currently do not hold this information by sub-area however this could be made available by contacting the Highways Service direct with further details of the sub-areas required.

Year	Numbers of public reported potholes	All defects recorded*	% fixed		Budget
			Temporary	Permanent / Semi-permanent	
2014	9,498	41,864	<1	>99	1,914,759
2015	11,123	35,895*	<1	>99	1,878,188
2016	13,821	30,599*	<1	>99	1,914,759

****Recording mechanism for recording defects altered in 2015 resulting in less defects recorded as part of structural repair projects.***

Due to the varying nature of traffic management that is required for the different categories of road, the position and location of the repair, the defect classification and the extent of repairs it is difficult to provide accurate costs for this.

We constantly review and compare the whole defect inspection and repair process to assess the cost effectiveness of the Service and we also compare performance with other Authorities and we share best practice and knowledge with our counterparts both regionally and nationally. Where improvements are identified these are undertaken with immediate effect.

Work is on-going to improve the quality of Statutory Undertaker reinstatements and the associated inspection resource has been increased over the last few months. The new extended Permit Scheme came in to force in June 2016 which gives us greater control over Statutory Utility works.

13. Question to Councillor Ian Morris, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Transport, Highways & the Environment from Councillor Christopher Groome:

I have seen a report that construction of the A509 Isham by-pass is due to be started later this year. Could the Cabinet Member confirm that this is indeed the case and the expected timetable? Will the road be just the Isham by-pass or will it include the Wellingborough extension? Is he aware that this road will be welcomed not only by Isham residents and motorists, but also by other villages used to get round the traffic jams?

The A509 Isham By-pass is a priority scheme for the County Council which I am sure will be welcomed by a very large number of residents, local businesses and visitors to Northamptonshire once it has been built and open to traffic. However, this scheme does not include the proposed extension of the road through to Wellingborough.

The estimated cost of the scheme is in the order of £38m. Under the Government's Local Growth Fund Round 1 the County Council has previously been successful in securing a sum of £15m towards the costs of the scheme. Moreover, I am pleased to confirm that as part of the Government's Local Growth Fund Round 3 announcement last week a further £10m has been secured subject to completion of the final business case and its approval by the Department of Transport. The County Council will now work on the case for securing the remaining funding for scheme using the Northamptonshire Revolving Infrastructure Fund approach which it has applied successfully to other schemes such as the Daventry Development Link.

In terms of the timescale for the delivery of the scheme, in addition to gaining approval of the final business case and the funding becoming fully secured, there are a number of detailed matters that require further work, including in relation to the detailed design of the scheme and securing the land. Moreover, in terms of the latter this could involve the need for a Compulsory Purchase Order inquiry to be held. In this respect the earliest possible date for a start on site is going to be the autumn of 2018. The construction period for the road is likely to be 18 months.

15. Question from Councillor Christopher Groome to Councillor Ian Morris

Because the new lighting was not up to the promised standard in Burton Latimer High Street, we asked officers to do an inspection. It transpired that Balfour Beattie had installed heads on the lamps giving out well below the specified amount of light. I believe this has happened in other places as well. Can the Cabinet Member tell me:

- How many lamps are affected countywide?
- Whether Balfour Beattie notified officers of this deficiency?
- What remedial action is being taken?
- What penalties there are for failures of this kind in the contract?
- Can we have a statement that every affected community will receive a written assurance that all lamps are to the agreed and specified wattage?
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The street lighting PFI has been a very successful programme of replacement with over 63,000 streetlights being replaced and is almost 99% complete.

We are currently aware of an issue with a small number of lanterns which is being looked at. As part of this a number of lanterns in the Burton Latimer area are in the process of being replaced and this work should be completed by the end of the week.

In response to the specific questions raised I would comment as follows:-

- 1. How many lamps are affected countywide?**
There are currently 715 lights countywide that are fitted with a temporary lantern.
- 2. Whether Balfour Beattie notified officers of this deficiency?** *Balfour Beatty have kept County Council officers fully aware of a lantern supply issue. Workers at the Philips factory in France that produce the Mini-Iridium lantern had been undergoing a prolonged period of industrial action and as a result supplies of new lanterns were not reaching Balfour Beatty as required. To enable to bulk of work to be completed in the required contract period and before external work gangs would be no longer available, temporary lanterns have been fitted at some locations meaning that they can quickly be swapped over as supplies arrive. This is a temporary solution and not a deficiency.*
- 3. What remedial action is being taken?** *Temporary lanterns have been fitted at some locations meaning that they can quickly be swapped over as supplies arrive. This is a temporary solution at no additional cost to the Council.*
- 4. What penalties there are for failures of this kind in the contract?** *There are no penalties applicable as this is a Force Majeure event outside the control of Balfour Beatty.*
- 5. Can we have a statement that every affected community will receive a written assurance that all lamps are to the agreed and specified wattage?** *The Council continues to monitor the situation and is fully aware of the affected streets and will ensure that Contractual obligations with respect to the Council's lighting standards are met. The situation is unfortunate but outside our control and as such we do not intend to contact affected communities directly.*

A large part of my report for this month is the material I sent out last Thursday, so this is in the way of a supplement.

You may recall that I left early from the February Council meeting to attend a CPRE briefing on brown field sites for housing development in Northamptonshire. The conclusion from the special study was that brown field sites could provide a very small proportion of the land needed. The reasons for this are first that there is very little land available and secondly that what land is available often requires remedial treatment at greater cost than the value of the land once treated. Black Bridge Farm is an example of this. Thus in the absence of public funding to bridge the gap the land is unlikely to come forward. As far as Black Bridge Farm is concerned I am hoping that the value to Roxhill as an extension to their main development will be enough.

In March I have attended two scrutiny meetings for children and finance. Progress on bringing Children's Services up to scratch continues apace and in finance we considered how to bring zero-based budgeting into the scrutiny process.

During April Fergus and I will be walking the town to look at the lights following the corrective action taken by NCC so far.

I shall be away on business for the March meeting so have to give my apologies.

**REPORT FROM THE TWINNING GROUP MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 2nd MARCH
2017 (Cllr M. Jerram)**

- Grant to be applied for from KBC Community Grant to print and distribute leaflets to all residents in B/L to try and increase membership of the group
- No school is willing to be involved in exchanges from our Twinning partners in either Germany or Italy. These languages are no longer taught in schools. Also there are many safeguarding problems with such visits these days
- Chairperson trying to get more involved in other Twinning Groups (Northamptonshire and Kettering) to gain information which may help
- A party of school children are visiting in July. Will stay in the Scout Centre in Kettering and make their own arrangements to visit places of interest
- Approximately 8 adults want to visit B/L in October from Italy
- Enquiries are being made with Altendiez to visit them later this year
- More ways of publicising the group were discussed – article in Focus and possibly in 4 Locals Magazine. Also they will have a publicity stand at the Duck Race.