

Meeting of BLTC 01 May 2018

Cllrs' Written Reports to BLTC

Borough Council Matters of Interest Written Reports

Cllr R. Groome

Member's Information Evening – April 9th 2018 – Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 - challenges faced – growing population and changing demographics. Home ownership is becoming unaffordable for more people. Not enough new homes are being built. Private rents are rising rapidly. Welfare reform for people on benefits and low incomes is a growing problem. There have also be cuts in funding for supported housing. Buy to lets are being purchased and private landlords are looking for the highest possible rent. The Kettering Homelessness Action Partnership has been set up in Kettering. The Borough Housing Department has reviewed staff resources and recruited new staff, and reduced the number of long term voids (Council houses unoccupied for a long time). It is also implementing a Homelessness Reduction Act project plan which reviews its homelessness prevention policies, processes and staff training. The Council is also expanding its portfolio of temporary accommodation through acquisitions and private sector leasing. The Keyways Housing Allocations Scheme is being changed so that statutory homeless households are re housed more quickly. More information is required from customers, so that the most needy are helped – people with a priority need with a local connection. Council officers try to help them keep their home to prevent homelessness, and more time is now allocated to this process. There is more emphasis on early intervention. Customers are given a personal housing plan according to their needs. Customers are expected to maximise their income, participate in mediation with their landlord if appropriate and enter into an agreement to pay off rent arrears or change some of the things they do.

Planning Meeting 17th April – Symmetry Park was turned down, basically because there is still no Isham by-pass – current roads cannot cope – problem for Isham, but also for other villages – Pytchley and Broughton which could become rat runs. Generally this is good news for Burton Latimer too, although the developers might appeal.

Members' Information Evening 23rd April 2018 – Invitation to submit a proposal for a single tier of local government in Northamptonshire – use of the word 'invitation' is interesting! It is clear that the government is expecting change, and is asking councils to take part in the inevitable, and have some say in how it happens. The government expects two new unitary authorities, one in the north of the county and one in the west. The timetable for putting in this submission is tight. Kettering Borough Council is expected to carry out extensive consultation. It is likely elections, due to be held next year will be postponed until the following year. At this stage town and parish council elections are likely to go ahead normally next year. The letter from the government outlined the current failures of County Council.

Full Council 25th April – The Council agreed to accept the invitation from the Secretary of State to submit a proposal for a single tier of government in Northamptonshire.

Cllr Smith

I have attended meetings concerning planning policy where partnership working with other towns was discussed and reassurance sought that this would not mean we would have to accept further development if other areas were not progressing as was predicted.

I have also attended Kettering Borough Council to hear the resolution to support officers in drawing up a plan for submission to the Secretary of State which will evolve in helping residents across the

county once we are informed as to the Governments vision and convey our ideas to progress a renewed authority to serve our communities.

I have also been consulting on various planning issues with local residents and have been discussing concerns around parking on grass verges along Churchill Way. Indeed residents have now conveyed a petition reaffirming their wish to put a plan in lace to detract from or stop people parking on the grass verges.

I am working with Cllr Macdonald to find a solution, which we are endeavouring to resolve in liaison with NCC highways. Presently some no parking signs have been placed along the road but a more permanent solution is being sought.

Other Town Cllrs' Reports

Cllr C. Groome

I have already circulated the note of the Library Task Group. Since then judicial reviews of the NCC decision-making process have been initiated, which will delay implementation of the latest scheme. Meanwhile we are awaiting details of the Section 106 monies levied for Burton library.

Looking to the future the library relationship and the work of the Section 106 group probably show the way forward for our relationship with NCC and KBC now and the new unitary authority later: we should look for a close working relationship rather than taking over service delivery ourselves. This week Cllr Macdonald and I are meeting the NCC Cabinet Member for transport to promote BLTC policies in line with this approach.

I had another meeting with East Midlands Trains to seek a better solution for the new timetable from 20 May. The peak period bus service between Wellingborough and Bedford was due to last 3 years. There is a glimmer of hope that it can be replaced by a train from December 2018. I have also had representations on the high cost of rail travel from Kettering to London compared with Peterborough, Northampton or Bedford.

The CPRE Committee met. It has a new Chairman from the Corby area. I sense that it may be modifying its views on rural development.

NCC (Cllr Smith-Haynes)

This month has seen changes politically, with a new Council Leader, Deputy Leader, and several new faces on the Cabinet. The Commissioners have still not arrived, so in the meantime it is business as usual. The move of Sajid Javid to Home Secretary may further delay this. Now we are in the 18/19 tax year, work is being undertaken to settle 17/18 accounts, how reserves can be replenished this year, and Star Chamber meetings are about to begin to forward plan the budget for 19/20.

The Leader has had meetings with District and Borough Council Leaders, MPs and representatives of the County Councils Network with regard to the Unitary bid that must be submitted in July. The Cabinet Member for LG Reform has met with Danny Moody from NCALC, to discuss the impact and opportunities for town and parish councils following Unitary.

There have been some training sessions for councillors from LGA re LG finance, and external professionals will be attending meetings to advise and answer questions re the change to Unitary. There will also be a Cabinet paper presented this month re the formalisation of an Improvement Board, to focus on finance and governance for the rest of the time NCC exists.

The PCC has had his bid accepted to govern Fire & Rescue. The transition is likely to take some months.

The spring phase of the Highways Repair Program has started, now that the extreme weather is (hopefully) behind us. Pothole repairs will be prioritised according to the severity of the hazard posed.

I have attended various meetings including Police and Crime Panel and Full Council. I also attended a 2 day induction course for my role as Governor of NHFT. This included practical training on the use of defibrillators, so I am now able to use them in an emergency.

Highways Report (Cllr F. Macdonald)

- 1) Extensive patching has been carried out on Bridle Rd
- 2) All roads in the town have been inspected and the necessary repairs agreed
- 3)) Many pot holes have been repaired but quite a number are still to be done this should be complete within about 10 days
- 4) The work at the town end of Higham Rd is due to the Environment Agency installing a box culvert to take the stream as the existing course is constantly getting blocked
- 5) The works on Finedon Rd are slowly progressing but it means no potholes on that road can be mended till the gas work is completed
- 6) Discussions are under way the completion of the football area on the Cranford Rd development also regarding the adoption of the open space off Dearlove Drive
- 7) Alumasc have agreed to fund a litter bin on Polwell Lane
- 8) All the cupboards in the Civic Centre are now lockable save for the one in the chamber
- 9) The public address equipment has been delivered
- 10)

BL Library Group Minutes

Library Plus/Friends/BLTC Community Hub Steering Group

MINUTES FROM MEETING 11/04/2018

PRESENT: Christopher Groome, Sue Padget, Linda Gregory, Roger Knight, Anne Lovely, Lindsay Brown, Diane Zanger-Smith, Jenny Davies

APOLOGIES: John Currall (BLTC & KBC)

CG opens the meeting by inviting everyone at the table to introduce themselves and explain their position on the committee:

Christopher Groome (*CG*): Chair of the group. Author and owner of original proposal of joining the Civic Centre with the Library and organiser of the public meeting held. On the Friends of Burton Latimer Library Committee, is a member of Burton Latimer Town Council and a former County Councillor.

Dianne Miles-Zanger (**DM**): member of Burton Latimer Town Council and Barton Seagrave Parish Councillor. Background in Libraries, Health & wellbeing sector (field of finance and accounting)

Anne Lovely (**AL**): strategic operations manager for the Library Plus service.

Linda Gregory (**LG**): member of the Friends of Burton Latimer Library Committee and the Burton Latimer Heritage Society Committee. Background in education.

Sue Padget (**SP**): Volunteer & Member of the Friends of Burton Latimer Library Committee. Background in psychotherapy & management.

Jenny Davies (**JD**): member of Burton Latimer Town Council. Background in politics (County Councillor and portfolio holder).

Roger Knight (**RK**): member of the Friends of Burton Latimer Library Committee. Background as a priest and former mayor and BLTC councillor.

Lindsay Brown (**LB**): Library Liaison for the Friends of Burton Latimer Library Committee, Library manager and member of the community.

AL: the financial position of the County Council is grave. The Section 114 is still in place with no sight of them ending soon. All reserves have been spent thus income generation is paramount. We are awaiting the Commissioners to arrive (end of this month) at which point even the retained Libraries could face further restructuring/cuts.

After the announcement in October the Public Consultation ended with NCC making the decision to retain 15 of its Libraries (Burton Latimer being one of them) and offer the remaining 21 as independent Libraries to parties who express interest. The best value report is available and the newly appointed directors of NCC are steering the County forward but this could change with the arrival of the commissioners.

Libraries are set to be taken back 'in-house' under the Public Health portfolio.

Section 106 money has been noted and earmarked for the Library: it must be carefully considered and planned as it can only be used for 'usable and accessible areas'. AL to confirm amount of Section 106 available for the Library specifically.

As a direct result of the staff consultation and finances the staffing has been restructured: the Grade H manager position in the retained medium sized Libraries is being deleted. There will be a spoke and hub structure with Burton being partnered with Wellingborough Library and the manager being responsible for both the large and medium Library. All candidates for these posts will be made aware that they will be expected to spend 2 days of their working week at the medium Library and that this may increase depending upon demand.

LG: There are concerns that the proposed spoke and hub combination will restrict Library interface, in terms of the accessibility to KBC and other services at the Library.

AL: KBC have an occupied space from a historic agreement where NCC picked KBC as a key partner; a SLA was drawn up which placed responsibility on to KBC to invest in the expansion of the Library (this is the extension of the KBC room) & in return KBC pay a yearly hire rate of £1.

SP: public health, KBC and existing Library staff are excellent at signposting in order to help members of the community and I am concerned about the continuation of this under the new structures.

LB: Marina and I expressed our concerns as the Library's managers at a meeting with AL last week; it is anticipated that the SLA with KBC will remain at the moment and that the proposed staffing will offer consistent staffing. There will be the equivalent of 2 ¾ FTE customer advisors and a Weekend assistant at the Library in the future; this will ensure that sickness and holidays can be covered in house without detrimental effect on the rest of the Library Plus service and that these staff will remain at Burton Library. Only the managers, area managers and peri-managers will be expected to travel to other locations.

AL: the staffing has been carefully considered to offer consistency in line with the current financial situation; this ensures that 15 Libraries can be retained under NCC with paid staff offering the Library core services.

RK: under the Public Health directorate the agenda has moved away from intervention and is now focused on tertiary care; in what way will this affect the future of the Library Service and more specifically Burton Latimer Library as a community hub?

AL: the term community hub has been overused and created false expectations; whilst the Library Plus service welcomes partners it must be made clear that the Libraries are not 'free' space and the Library staff are also not 'free'.

CG: In order to future-proof Burton Latimer's Library we want to see a community hub: the 2008 document showed the desire to create a larger hub and this is the purpose of this committee.

AL: whilst the Library service is in favour of this it will have to be done through funding, grants and Section 106 money as there is NO additional money available. Whilst there are other parts of Section 106 money available it is very difficult to 'pool' together different 106 money: each has specific requirements.

JD: looking to preserve services in the town, any changeover to Unitary Authority will raise both opportunities and obstacles with period of certainty. The Town Council wishes to retain influence and to be involved in consultations.

RK: the proposal of Unitary Authority would provide greater power to Town and Parish councils which would mean implications in terms of finance and budgets.

JD: the Town Council wants suitable accommodation and a Community Hub could prove important for that to happen.

AL: it must be noted that the Borough councils are against the Unitary Authorities idea.

CG: The recent Government letter to the County is strongly in favour of 2 Unitary Authorities (3 being too unwieldy) as it will be distinct from the 1 County Council Authority currently in place.

DZ: the Town has already lost the Barclays Bank so the retention of the Library is important for the Town.

AL: Nat West bank are going in to Oundle Library: there could be scope for this at Burton.

CG: the next practical steps are that myself and JD are attending the Northants Association for Local Councils meeting to discuss a combined response to the recent letter from the Government.

CG: invited RK to express the views of the Friends Committee

RK: the Friends clearly wish to keep the Library open and are happy to explore the option of working with the Civic Centre and BLTC to ensure this. The group is growing and keen to help; it is the view of the Friends that the Civic Centre needs to be redesigned but the simplest option is to link the two buildings. In the long term it would be good to look at the spaces in the Civic Centre to make them easier to let and also include a larger kitchen.

SP: moving forward we need confirmation as to who owns what building and how to best join them in terms of ownership.

AL: will contact Property for clarification.

CG: the BLTC lease of the Civic Centre is due for renewal in 2 years.

SP: need to look at overall management in the future once the project is complete.

RK: would this impact on improving the cleaning and caretaking at the Civic Centre?

CG: in agreement with RK (and raised with BLTC) that cleaning/caretaking and the physicality of management at the Civic Centre.

AL: management and the physical upkeep of the Civic Centre would need to sit outside of NCC budgets.

RK: other Towns such as Thrapston have their Town Council offices within the Library and Library staff overseeing this.

SP: it will be a while before the buildings are linked but feels there is opportunity for management for the 2 buildings to be put in place prior

DZ: the precept has already been set for the financial year

JD: the practicalities of the proposal are to establish legalities and ownership of the buildings and to set up IT and integrated systems

SP: people are the first step: a manager will provide the commitment, passion and drive for the project. 'Awards for All' could be a potential source in terms of IT

DZ: Barton Parish pay management for the Parish Hall

AL: any manager would need to be appointed separately from the Library

LG: proposal to co-opt John Meads (Heritage Society) onto the steering committee

Seconded by **RK** and **JD**

CG to formally invite either John or Anita (Chair) onto the committee to represent the Heritage Society.

CG: what are the views of the Library Service in terms of the proposal and the expansion of the Library as a community hub?

AL: funding cannot come from the Library Service

DZ: request for **CG** to raise this at the next Town Council meeting.

CG: there is a 25k precept not all of which is being spent

SP: the precept would not need to be raised very much in order to raise a salary for a manager

RK: reminds the group that historically the community are prejudiced against this idea concerning the precept

SP & JD: it is important to remember that the post would involve fund raising, running community activities etc. and would form part of the job description

AL: this type of post exists at Moulton Library and is known as 'Community Connector': they are responsible for the Library, café, community hall etc.

CG: Conclusion: we want to 'future proof' the Library, there is still much uncertainty. Under a Unitary Authority both buildings would be owned by the same authority so it is too early for any physical changes to the buildings. There is a need for a period of co-operation and a need to develop a job for a person to manage the buildings: this will need co-operation and support from BLTC: **JD, DZ & CG** to represent the ideas to BLTC.

CG to circulate date of next meeting.

CCMB Report

PPMB Report