

BOROUGH COUNCIL OF KING'S LYNN & WEST NORFOLK**KING'S LYNN AREA CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE**

Minutes from the Meeting of the King's Lynn Area Consultative Committee held on Thursday, 16th November, 2023 at 6.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Saturday Market Place, King's Lynn PE30 5DQ

PRESENT: Councillor J Rust (Chair)
Councillors M Bartrum, S Bearshaw, F Bone, S Collop, R Colwell, S Everett (Vice-Chair), D Heneghan, B Jones, A Kemp, J Lowe, D Sayers and A Ware

Portfolio Holder

Councillor C Morley, Finance

Under Standing Order 34:

Councillor S Bearshaw

Officers:

Michelle Drewery, Assistant Director, Resources
Mark Whitmore, Assistant Director, Health, Wellbeing and Public Protection / Management Team Representative
Wendy Vincent, Democratic Services Officer

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor M Wilkinson.

2 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 21 September 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Kemp declared an interest as being instrumental in setting up the West Lynn Action Group to raise funds.

Councillor Sayers declared an interest as Secretary of West Lynn Action Group.

4 URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

5 **MEMBERS PRESENT PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 34**

Councillor Bearshaw was present pursuant to Standing Order 34.

6 **CHAIRMAN'S CORRESPONDENCE (IF ANY)**

There was no Chair's correspondence.

7 **RECOMMENDATIONS ON SPECIAL EXPENSES CHARGE FOR KING'S LYNN 2024 / 2025**

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The Assistant Director Resources explained that an update on some of the figures since the report had been published was available as a supplement on Mod Gov.

The Assistant Director, Resources reminded Members that the terms of reference for the King's Lynn Area Consultative Committee (KLACC) described one of its roles as acting as a consultative forum, on the funding raising by, and utilisation of the King's Lynn Special Expenses, and to offer input on priorities for this expenditure and if appropriate the level of funds to be raised which would need to be a recommendation to Cabinet

It was highlighted that any recommendations would need to be made in full consideration of the implications on the Special Expenses charge.

The Assistant Director, Resources drew the Committee's attention to the following sections:

- 1.3 – List of services currently charged to Special Expenses.
- 1.4 – Breakdown and charges applicable for the current year for Special Expenses.
- 2 – Estimated breakdown of cost of special expense changes for King's Lynn (estimate) 2024/2025.
- 2.3 The main movements between the special expenses charges for 2023/2024 and 2024/2025.
- 2.5 – How the Council applied a notional split of the £5 increase in council tax.
- 3 – Currently there were no proposals for new schemes for consideration.
- £10,810 reserve in respect of Borough Council staff occupying South Lynn Community Centre and it was a decision for KLACC to consider where the funding should be directed towards in terms of its priorities.

The Chair invited the Committee to comment/ask questions, a summary of which is set out below.

Councillor Kemp commented on the due diligence of street lighting, bearing in mind economies of scale and the service being undertaken cheaper by NCC and had this been looked at. In response, the Assistant Director, Resources advised that she did not have the details to hand but would check with the relevant service area and respond to the Committee.

The Chair, Councillor Rust reminded the Committee that Tracy Brooker and Peter Gray had attended a previous meeting and provided an update on street lighting and advised Councillors to look at the minutes from that meeting.

Councillor Kemp asked if they were LED or Solar to save costs with the current scheme. In response, the Assistant Director, Resources undertook to check the details and forward a response to the Committee.

Councillor Colwell referred to 1.5 and the sum of £10,810 set aside in reserves due to the occupancy of staff in South Lynn Community Centre and asked if there was a time limit on which the money could be spent. In response, the Assistant Director, Resources explained that this money was set aside in a reserve and currently there was no time limit and added that the Council held a number of different earmarked reserves and was currently undertaking a review process to identify funding to offset against other priorities across the Council but this amount was set aside specifically for KLACC and would not be part of that review.

In response to questions from Councillor Bone on utility prices and estimated increase and fixed term contract, the Assistant Director, Resources explained that the Council forward purchased its utility provision through Crown Commercial Contracts so the figures would be based on the estimates provided to the Council. The Assistant Director, Resources added that there had been a significant increase in the current year but that at the moment the Council was expecting that some of those costs to reduce next year and outlined the work being undertaken on the number of units used, etc. In conclusion, the Assistant Director, Resources explained that there would be a number of contributing factors relating to the cost of utilities.

The Assistant Director, Health, Wellbeing and Public Protection/Management Team representative advised that a report on streetlighting was given to the Committee on 30 January 2023. Click on the link below to view the minutes from the meeting.

<https://democracy.west-norfolk.gov.uk/documents/g5445/Printed%20minutes%2030th-Jan-2023%2016.30%20Kings%20Lynn%20Area%20Consultative%20Committee.pdf?T=1>

Councillor Jones commented that the lighting in The Walks was still using incandescent bulbs and asked what work was being carried out to change to LED. In response, the Assistant Director, Health, Wellbeing and Public Protection explained that it could only be assumed that it was part of the current programme and for the Committee to consider inviting Tracy Brooker to a future meeting to provide an update.

Following questions from Councillor Kemp on the income from Community Centres of £81,000, the cost of operating them and the profit to the Council, the Assistant Director, Resources advised that she did not have the information to hand but would circulate a response to the Committee.

In response to a question from the Chair on the special expenses and cost increase, had special expenses costs for all areas that had them risen and how were they being managed. The Assistant Director, Resources explained that the same rationale/estimates had been applied to all areas, but those areas did not have the same level of special expenses as King's Lynn had.

The Chair asked for clarification on the wider variety of services offered by King's Lynn and that the area was bigger and more densely populated. In response, the Assistant Director, Resources explained that not necessarily and referred to the breakdown of the list of services and not all of those services were provided in other areas and would depend on the services provided in each parish and town council areas.

Councillor Heneghan commented that King's Lynn provided more services and people came to the town and made use of those services and it seemed that people living in King's Lynn were being punished for living there. In response, the Assistant Director, Resources explained that there were a number of services which were charged for, for example, car parking and money was being spent on other things during the visit which brought income into the area and helped the economy.

Councillor Heneghan added that it would be fairer to add up all the special expenses for the Borough and divide it equally to everybody and asked if it had been considered. In response, the Assistant Director, Resources advised that this could be one of the options the Council looked at if the authority decided it was going to stop passing the cost of special expenses and be picked up as part of the overall Borough Council Tax, but the options had not been looked at.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Councillor Morley commented that it was more difficult to divide the cost of special expenses across the Borough and that rural areas would be subsidising King's Lynn. Councillor Morley added that the big spends such as open spaces, The Walks and public conveniences which were tourist destination points

which generated income and was therefore a legitimate argument to look at. Councillor Morley commented that open spaces could be analysed more closely, for example, The Walks to determine where people travelled from, etc.

Councillor Sayers asked for confirmation that the list of special expenses were revenue. In response, the Assistant Director, Resources explained that there was an element of a contribution to capital and gave an example of £50,000 allocated for play equipment which was managed by apportioning the cost to special expenses over a number of years.

Following questions from Councillor Colwell on the reasons why there had been a significant decrease in the cost of bus shelters, the Assistant Director, Resources drew the Committee's attention to section 2.3 penultimate bullet point which set out the reason around the decrease in utility costs and could be the level of consumption but undertook to check the details with the relevant service area. The Chair added that her recollection that there was a change in the way this was calculated and that the Council was paying business rates on bus shelters because they were displaying advertisements and there was something around the reduction in costs which could be linked. This could be checked in previous minutes.

Councillor Kemp commented on the potential increase of income from open spaces such as Greyfriars and Tower Gardens where there had been a recent launch and added that more events could be scheduled. With regard to bus shelters Councillor Kemp stated that extra tax should not be incurred because of advertisements.

Councillor Kemp referred to the £10,800 reserve from staff occupancy at South Lynn Community Centre and proposed that it be considered at this evening's meeting, which was seconded by Councillor Sayer. In response, the Chair outlined the reasons why she was not against the proposal but why it was not going to be considered at this evening's meeting so that the Committee could have a proper discussion and informed debate.

Councillor Bone commented on the positive work undertaken in South Lynn by Councillor Kemp but highlighted that other areas should be considered and stated he did not support the proposal.

Councillor Colwell stated that there was no deadline to spend the £10,800 reserve and therefore did not support Councillor Kemp's proposal and added that it should be deferred to the next meeting.

The Chair reiterated that she did not accept Councillor Kemp's proposal this evening and it would be deferred to a future meeting to enable an informed debate when all Members of the Committee were present.

Following further comments from Councillor Kemp on the residents of West Lynn being deprived of its community asset, the Assistant Director, Resources confirmed that the £10,800 reserve was a calculation of the estimate of loss of income and was the decision of KLACC as to where the reserve was spent.

Under Standing Order 34, Councillor Bearshaw made the following comments/asked questions as set out below.:

- How long were staff anticipated to be located in South Lynn Community Centre? Could an answer be circulated to the Committee as it had to be considered in the budget process.
- Comments made by Councillors Heneghan and Morley – advised he was from a parished area and established a play park which increased the precept by twice the amount and that the Parish Council would not have been able to provide the facility and advised Councillor Kemp if she wished to set up a play park it could be done. Visitors to the play park travelled from a wide range of areas for example, Fakenham, Wisbech and Downham Market to use the facility and that the village was picking up the cost. A new car park was to be commenced and would be added to the parish precept or apply for grants to fund the works.

Councillor Kemp drew the Committee's attention to the South Lynn and North Lynn Community Forum which had been set up and properly constituted in previous years and had been disbanded by the Borough Council. Councillor Kemp added that support could be given to these sorts of groups to apply for funding and asked if consideration could be given to bringing back groups such as those with Borough Council support to facilitate funding as it was difficult for those in deprived areas to get residents to take on the officer role.

The Chair explained that the above groups were prior to KLACC and that Councillor Kemp had stated it was too hard to establish forums/groups in disadvantaged areas as there were different demographics but now suggested that there should be a North Lynn and South Lynn Forum. Councillor Kemp confirmed the above comment to be correct because there was a lot of officer support by taking minutes and giving advice and added that was why it worked. The Chair thanked Councillor Kemp for her contribution.

Councillor Bone stated that the Committee had earlier tasked the Assistant Director, Health, Wellbeing and Public Protection to look into the viability of setting up KLACC as a constitutional body to undertake the work of those groups for the King's Lynn Area to work together rather than working against each other in individual wards. Councillor Bone highlighted that KLACC was the correct body to undertake such work.

Councillor Heneghan responded to the comments made by Councillor Bearshaw and explained that it was all one borough and therefore

shared facilities but stated that it was slightly odd that certain areas paid more than others when facilities were shared.

Councillor Kemp stated that she supported Councillor Bone's proposal.

AGREED: 1) That the Committee endorsed the Special Expenses charge for 2024/2025 as set out in section 2.2 of the report.

2) T Brooker and P Gray be invited to attend a future meeting to provide an update on street lighting.

3) Proposals for allocating the £10,800 reserve be considered at the next meeting.

4) The Assistant Director, Health, Wellbeing and Public Protection to look into KLACC being set up as a constituted group.

8 **UPDATE OF THE PROVISION OF ACCESSIBLE PLAY EQUIPMENT AT THE WALKS, KING'S LYNN**

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The Assistant Director, Health, Wellbeing and Public Protection provided an update on the provision of accessible play areas in the Walks, King's Lynn. A summary of the key points are set out below relating to the consultation exercise:

- A number of hard copy questionnaires completed and on-line. It was noted that in total 482 responses had been received which was a huge amount given the short timescale, around a month.
- Vast majority of responses were on-line so the Council could be satisfied that there was a good cross-section of the community as to whether accessible play equipment should be installed at The Walks.
- Brief headlines from responses Q4 – do you think that it is important for provision of equipment for children with additional needs – split into 5 questions and on important and very important accounted for 87% of responses which was useful information to be included on the Norfolk County Council application deadline of 6 December 2023.

The Chair, Councillor Rust informed the Committee that she had personally took copies around The Walks and spoken to a number of people and was overwhelmed with the level of support. Some people were not from West Norfolk and provided examples of other locations where accessible play equipment had been installed. The Chair commented that she had found the experience to be uplifting to receive such positive feedback.

The Chair thanked all those present for their contribution.

Councillor Mrs Collop commented that she had handed out hard copies of the questionnaire in the Reffley area and had received very responsive feedback. Councillor Mrs Collop asked when the outcome of the funding would be announced. In response, the Assistant Director, Health, Wellbeing and Public Protection explained that he would advise the Committee of the announcement when made.

Councillor Bearshaw asked if the application was successful was there a time limit to spend the funding.

The Chair referred to the previous review of play areas which had been undertaken by the working group who had produced a written report and it was a valid reason for undertaking a further review in the Spring. A copy of the working group's report was available.

AGREED: 1) That the update report be noted.

2) The Play Area Working Group to undertake a further review of play areas in the Spring.

9 **COMMITTEE'S WORK PROGRAMME AND CABINET'S FORWARD DECISION LIST**

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The Committee noted the Cabinet's Forward Decision List and Committee Work Programme.

The following item was proposed for the January meeting:

- Shared Prosperity Fund (was there an opportunity for KLACC to apply to the fund).

10 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Committee was scheduled for Monday 29 January 2024 at 6 pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, King's Lynn.

The meeting closed at 6.48 pm