Meeting of BLTC 05 April 2016

Reports

Borough Council Matters of Interest Written Reports

Cllr R. Groome

On 15th March I attended the Planning Policy Committee. On the agenda was an update on Burton Latimer, Desborough and Rothwell Town Centres. The Joint Core Strategy states that there is a need for retail investment within the Borough to serve its growing communities, and most of the retail investment within the Borough will be in Kettering Town Centre, but that the A6 Towns are important for local services and convenience shopping. There is increased need for public realm, better access and better parking. Officers have undertaken shopper/user surveys. Burton Latimer is identified as above the national average for restaurants, cafes and takeaways, and for estate agents. Potential has been identified for a thriving night-time economy. Sainsbury's is not included in the present town centre so is not part of the survey. "An emphasis on delivering a greater range and quality of shops is likely to provide a further draw to the town as this was one of the most popular requests to improve the town." Changes are proposed to town centre boundaries/primary shopping areas. There will be a consultation with Town Councils and any existing Chambers of Commerce with regard to this. I reminded of the Committee of Burton Latimer Urban Design Framework (2004).

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

1 The budget reductions in expenditure are having an impact on Children’s Centres. The County Council is consulting on revision of the services in Burton Latimer which it proposes to relocate from Meadowside School to the Library. Unlike many authorities NCC is not proposing closure of any libraries but is making the buildings accommodate more services and become a true community hub as a means of getting more for the money.

2 I have continued to support the improvement programme for Children’s Services as a member of the Corporate Parenting Board. Ofsted has completed its 4 week inspection and I was interviewed. My own view is that we are making considerable progress but there is still a lot of work to do to achieve an ‘Outstanding’ rating. We are still awaiting the official outcome.

3 The county’s MPs have waded into the issue of unitary councils for Northamptonshire. At full council I seconded a motion on unitary councils, asking that a proper independent job be done analysing the options and their consequences for costs and democratic accountability. The motion as amended was passed.

4 In my role as Chairman of LANRAC I was invited to make a presentation to a Leicestershire County Council scrutiny group looking at the upgrading and electrification of the Midland Main Line in the Market Harborough area. I have attached a copy of the presentation because it summarises the work I have been doing over several years to get investment into our railway line after decades of neglect. In my experience the long haul nearly always achieves more than short term headlines.

5 We had a meeting of the Children’s Scrutiny Committee. The two key issues were the rising demand for school places where I am on the task group and the performance of our schools which is still well below what it should be. NCC has just recruited a new Assistant Director for Education who is really setting about getting the standards up. Despite Government efforts to take schools away from councils, they are still left with the jobs of providing school places and raising standards (with Ofsted).
Concerns about the state of Northamptonshire’s roads led me to submit a question to Cllr Michael Clarke, the Highways Portfolio Holder. I have appended a copy of my question and his very full reply.

11. Question to Councillor Michael Clarke, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Transport, Highways & The Environment from Councillor Christopher Groome:

We rightly celebrated the success of the move from temporary fixes for potholes to more permanent repairs as right for road users while making more efficient use of resources. Recent reports from residents in my Division suggest that the quality of pothole repairs has slipped.

- How does the Cabinet member monitor adherence to policy in this area?
- What do the figures tell him?
- Is the perception a consequence of the recent budget cut for pothole repairs?
- How does the Cabinet member monitor adherence to policy in this area?

Performance monitoring of repairs is undertaken in two ways; via monthly reporting through contractual key performance indicators which measure compliance to the Council’s policy and quarterly via the data provided in the quarterly Directorate performance reports which measures the percentage of permanent/semi permanent and temporary repairs.

- What do the figures tell him?

The target for all of the defects being repaired permanently and semi-permanently is 95% and this has been achieved or bettered since quarter 4 of 2012. (See graph below). This shows a general decline in the number of reported defects since the peak in 2012/13 and the percentage permanent/semi-permanent repair is being maintained at well above 95%.
Whilst the aim is to have all repairs as permanent repairs, the additional time needed on the highway to undertake a permanent repair may result in a temporary repair being made to immediately remove the hazard the defect poses, with a permanent repair carried out in the future.

To clarify what permanent and temporary repairs actually are, Northamptonshire County Council have agreed that pothole repairs will fall into the following three categories:

- **Permanent**

  o The most robust repair that includes removing debris from a pothole, saw cutting edges and over banding using a hot applied material mechanically compacted.

- **Semi-permanent**

  o A repair that includes removing debris from a pothole and repairing the pothole using a cold applied material mechanically compacted.

- **Temporary**

  o Minimal preparation of the defect and repaired using a cold applied material and manually compacted.

  - *Is the perception a consequence of the recent budget cut for pothole repairs?*

In general the perception that the quality of pot hole repairs has slipped recently may be due to a number of reasons namely:–

- An ageing road network which is subject to accelerated deterioration during the winter months where the condition is affected by ice/snow and rain which may result in more severe defects that occur more quickly. Where a permanent pothole repair is carried out to address a defect that is within our intervention levels the surrounding area may also be in a generally crazed and / or also in a state of decline and over time this may require further work. Often, this additional work is not associated with the original repair.

- The implementation of the Northamptonshire Highways Maintenance Initiative (NHMI), which commenced in 2010/11, supports a preventative maintenance approach to stop roads reaching a spiral of decline. Since this time, budgets have been refocused. More of the budget in any one year is now spent on sealing the road surface to prevent water ingress and prevent further long term problems rather than on more costly structural repairs. This has resulted in a reduced structural resurfacing and repair works programme and these roads will be subject to more patching and pothole repairs.

- The historic lack of funding has influenced the extent of works able to be funded in any one year and resources have to be prioritised accordingly which may result in more individual safety repairs rather than dealing with all of the defects on an area wide basis.

Without understanding if this perception is as a result of works undertaken on a particular road, close or junction, it is difficult to provide a more precise response. However, notwithstanding the above, Northamptonshire Highways will always fully investigate any specific reports of apparent, substandard work.

**Market Harborough Line Speed Improvements Scrutiny Panel**
LANRAC Evidence presented by Christopher Groome

1. LANRAC stands for Leicester and Northamptonshire Rail Action Committee. It was formed some 20 years ago by local parish, district and county councils interested in promoting investment in the Midland Main Line. The objective was to provide new stations and new services. Nowadays its membership covers also Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Rutland.

2. LANRAC’s mode of operation is to work alongside the train operating company and the infrastructure provider, currently East Midlands Trains and Network Rail, partly as a lobby group and partly as a facilitator. To this end we have developed good relations with MPs along the line. There was a huge investment backlog on the line, largely because no-one had succeeded in bringing the various stakeholders together to rival the lobbying power of, for example, local authorities in the North West.

3. Early in our life we confined ourselves to issues like timetabling, capacity of the trains, and condition of the stations. We then moved to promote/support the opening of new stations. East Midlands Parkway, Corby and Ilkeston were the successful ones. We did this through engagement in such activities as the RUS (Route Utilisation Study) and the franchising process, supported by networking to get other stakeholders on side.

4. The first major breakthrough was getting Loughborough station and its environment upgraded. The station was unfit for purpose, with short platforms. The surrounding area, including the goods yard, was derelict. Resolving the problem depended on getting the various landowners and regulatory bodies to work together and we had access to them all. The ingredient which triggered action was the drive and enthusiasm of the new MP for Loughborough, Nicky Morgan. Now Loughborough has a station to be proud of, with full length platforms, lifts for the disabled and sensitively modernised station buildings. The surrounding area has much needed new housing with a bus interchange, car parking and better road access.

5. The next project we got involved in was Nottingham. We realised that we had a canny team of people at Network Rail who were masters at bringing together various maintenance and improvement budgets to make a scheme financially viable. Worn out track and signalling have to be replaced periodically, so that is a good time to seek extra funds to increase capacity and upgrade the line. There are other funds for station improvement and DDA (Disability Discrimination Act) compliance. So the Nottingham project was born and delivered to time and budget. The planning of the works and the replacement services was masterly and showed that the teams at Network Rail and East Midlands Trains could be trusted to handle major works.

6. It was obvious that all the ingredients were there to go for the ‘big one’, the upgrading and electrification of the line to cope with higher speeds and provide the capacity needed for the massive growth in passenger numbers and freight. Note that I put upgrading first because electrification without upgrading would only provide limited benefits and would make the upgrading more expensive by ‘locking in’ the present inadequate track layout and signalling. This was an issue right up to a week before the Government’s announcement that they would fund the upgrading and electrification because the Treasury wanted to save the money for the upgrading and figured that the ‘sparks effect’ was sexy enough on its own. The network of MPs along the line, headed by Nicky Morgan and including my own MP, Philip Hollobone, was crucial in making sure that the upgrading was funded to take place before the electrification. They were also crucial in getting the ‘pause’ lifted after last year’s funding crisis, so that the work is now going forward again, albeit at a slower pace.
7. I have been spelling out the history of LANRAC and Midland Main Line development to give the context of what you are considering today. Market Harborough needs to take its rightful place in the overall scheme of things. There are bigger problems to be solved at Derby and Leicester, but the track alignment and the inadequate station at Market Harborough need to be addressed before the line is electrified. The previous Managing Director of East Midlands Trains said that the 60 mile per hour speed limit through Market Harborough was the worst on any main line in the country. The station itself has all the problems which have now been fixed in Loughborough.

8. I want to conclude by highlighting how improvement of the track alignment at Market Harborough contributes to the improvement of the functioning of the line for all the communities it serves and therefore to users of Market Harborough station. Under the existing regime the ambition of Sheffield, Nottingham, Derby and Leicester to have faster services to London by taking out intermediate stops sets them at odds with the aspirations of intermediate stations like Market Harborough to have frequent stops and connectivity with other stations along the line. Increasing line speed and capacity gives us the opportunity to have both. We also get a station which is fit for purpose and a train service which is more reliable and less polluting.

Reports from Representatives on Outside Bodies

Cllr R. Groome

On 17th October I attended the AGM of Burton Latimer Heritage Society. After the AGM we had a presentation from a member of the Kettering Museum staff on researching family history. Since Cllr Denton-Stacey's resignation, we will now need a new Town Council representative as well as me. The new exhibition 'Memories of Childhood' is now open.

REPORT OF THE SPORTS AND LEISURE GROUP MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 21st MARCH 2016

Members Present: Ruth Groome (Chair), Maureen Jerram (note taker), Nigel Padget

Also Present: Christopher Groome, Philip Harpur, Fergus Macdonald

Apologies: Jane Followes, Ritchie Jeune, Roger Knight

Report of the last meeting (18 February 2016): Were agreed as a true record, pp RG 2nd PH

Representation on Group: To be discussed next time.

Terms of reference: To be discussed next time.

Sports and Leisure Centre:
- Guy Holloway and Rob Harbour from KBC had attended the last BLTC meeting when it was pointed out how bad the consultation KBC had done was and a complete waste of public money
- GH and RH were not in favour of any B/L 106 monies going to Kettering Town Football Club to help fund an S and L Centre. Whilst they felt that BLTC should work with a partner re 106 money (approx £715k towards an Indoor S and L Centre at present), they felt that the football world is too uncertain at times for an S and L centre to be under their umbrella alone. It was felt that if any public money were to go into this venture it would need to be insulated from Kettering Football Club and perhaps managed by a separate entity to safeguard it’s future.
• It was felt that there needed to be a 25 year lease on the land to protect any future Centre. The lease on the Country Club land was still under discussion but about to be resolved. FM suggested that the best solution would be if KTFC were given a temporary short term lease from the Trustees so we would have time to discuss any solutions there may be to the S and L Centre being built on the Country Club land without KFC having the complete ownership. It could be managed by a Board of B/L people. CG and NP spoke out against BLTC being responsible for any delay in a deal between the Trustees and KTFC. The ideal solution would be if KTFC could provide an S and L Centre entirely from their own resources, leaving the public money for other uses. If public money was needed, an arrangement to insulate the Centre from KTFC finances could be negotiated at a later date. Agreed we should write a letter to the Trustees of the land once the position of BLTC was determined (Agreement needed by BLTC).

Latimer Arts College:
• Ian Woods (a Governor at Latimer Arts College) suggested the S and L Centre should be built there and it was felt by this group that some prior discussion may have taken place with Latimer Arts College by KBC
• There was a long discussion by the S and L Group which felt that it wasn’t an option for the following reasons:
  o There was a history within B/L – most residents had been upset that that school was located in Barton Seagrave rather than in Burton Latimer. The Group felt strongly that B/L residents would be very angry if a S and L Centre was situated there instead of in B/L.
  o Latimer College is outside the Parish boundary of B/L.
  o Any 106 monies are specifically towards an indoor S and L Centre in B/L from development within B/L and would not only have to be completely redefined but would also meet fierce opposition from B/L if spent outside the area
  o The Latimer Arts College is not geographically close to B/L. Why should B/L residents have to travel to get there?
  o If the S and L Centre was at Latimer Arts College there would be very really concerns over who would ‘control, it. When the College becomes an Academy (as all schools now need to within the next few years) then any S and L Centre would be under whoever is running the Academy which could be anyone/firm and certainly would not have the local community as it’s main priority. A good example of this is the Kettering Buccleugh Academy where the existing S and L Centre was threatened with being demolished when it went to Academy Status
  o Additionally there are plans to move Latimer Arts College to the East of Kettering site and redevelop the land upon which it currently stands
  o The site at Latimer Park is geographically ideal for residents of both B/L and B/S to use

So the Group wanted it to be noted that they disagreed with any S and L Centre being build at Latimer Arts College with 106 money designated for one in B/L for the above reasons and request that a letter is sent to both KBC and the Chair of Governors at Latimer Arts College expressing these views (Agreement needed by BLTC).

It was agreed that the ideal situation would be for it to be built on the Country Club land and if public money was spent on it owned by a suitable Board to include councillors. This would then protect it for the future and also the public money invested.

It was also pointed out that there is a constant demand for S and L Centres and if managed and run properly they could be a money ‘spinner’ especially if near a bar (Country Club) and external pitches including all weather ones

Play areas and open spaces:
**RG** and **FM** to visit and identify all within B/L, plus what equipment is on them and the condition of said equipment

**Taylor Wimpey land:** To be discussed at the next meeting

**Funding including 106 monies:** 106 monies identified as above. Grants to be discussed at a future date.

**Any other business:**
- Cars are continuing to park on the grass alongside the ‘service road’ in Station Road, thus ruining it and the daffodils etc that residents have planted. **FM** to take this up as Highways rep

**Date of next meeting:** Monday 25th April 2016, 7pm, Civic Centre. Agreed to invite Ritchie Jeune from KTFC.