

KETTERING TOWN COUNCIL

REPORT FOR DECISION

Item No:- 25/015

Committee:-	ANNUAL COUNCIL
Date:-	14 th May 2025
Author:-	Martin Hammond, Clerk
Report Title:-	Budgetary Changes for 2025-6
Wards Affected:-	None

1. Purpose of Report

To agree changes to the budget for 2025-6 as recommended by the Finance and Governance Committee.

2. Recommendation

Council is asked to approve the recommendations of the Finance and Governance Committee as set out in para 3.2. of this report and that the Council's budget for 2025/6 be amended accordingly.

3. Information

- 3.1. The Finance and Governance Committee, at its meeting on 23rd April 2025 considered how to use the end of year surplus arising from underspends in the 2024/5 year. Some of the anticipated underspending had already been locked into the budget for 2025/6 but that left £54,251 available for re-allocation.
- 3.2. The Committee agreed to recommend the following use of those funds, which necessitates an alteration to the Council's budget for 25/6 and Council is asked to approve those changes now.
 - A sum of £5,844, being the underspend in 24/5 for the neighbourhood plan, be passported through and added to the budget in 25/6
 - A sum of £15,000 be allocated for youth services, subject to a more detailed report being provided to Council on the proposed interventions

- A sum of £10,000 be allocated for town centre improvements, subject to a more detailed report being provided to Council on the proposed interventions
- A sum of £7,000 be added to the neighbourhood plan budget
- A sum of £10,000 be set aside to pay for the acquisition and operation of a vehicle to support the market
- A sum of £6,407 be added to reserves, with £1000 of that going to the election reserve.

3.3. The logic behind this set of recommendations is:-

- A) Youth Services** Although still the subject of discussions, there is a view that investing in youth services across town will help reduce anti-social behaviour, develop the skills of young people and make a wider contribution to society. The possibility of a grant from NNC, contributions from the OPFCC and utilising the skills of several voluntary groups can all be harnessed so that a proposal to the next ordinary Council on what the best interventions are can be written. A guide budget of **£15,000** is suggested. It is likely that this will have to be an annual figure.
- B) Town Centre** The Neighbourhood Plan consultation has already flagged up perceptions that the town centre needs more visible care and attention and that options exist to make relatively small improvements which will have a disproportionate effect. The recent spring clean project demonstrated that small measures can be effective in lifting the mood. Members have also discussed the merits of a shop front grant scheme, although to be effective, this would need more resources than we have; it might nevertheless be possible to pay for cosmetic improvements such as the treatment provided to the Gala Bingo building. The Cultural Consortium is also keen to use vacant spaces to develop on street art and is in early discussions with *Love Kettering* to develop a concept. A budget of **£10,000** would help deliver these improvements and also pick up other improvements coming out of the Neighbourhood Plan engagement which are not appropriate to include in the plan this could be a one off or an annual figure.
- C) Neighbourhood Plan** A two year budget of £40,000 was set for the Neighbourhood Plan, which assumed £18,000 in government grant. The expenditure in 24/5 was £10,863, of which £6,708 was met by grant, leaving £29,137 to spend in 25/6. The project plan and the scope for the plan are already quite broad and intensive and it is likely more resources will be needed for public engagement (leaflets, website, meetings, events) and the administrative capacity to deliver these. It is suggested that a further **£7000** be added to the budget. This would be a time limited addition.

D) **Markets.** The Council has benefitted from its good working relationship with NNC in delivering the market; the two staff employed to provide market stalls use a NNC vehicle free of charge, plus a trailer and we have free use of the market store to keep our market equipment. This relationship was dependent on the casual staff also continuing to be NNC employees for their day job; one has now resigned and this means that, operationally, the vehicle and trailer and the store are now no longer available. This leaves the Council having to source its own vehicle. A provision of **£10,000** will need to be included in the budget, and this would be an ongoing commitment

4. Consultation and Engagement

- 4.1. Youth services were discussed again at Council in March with feedback from town centre interests as well as members that action needed to be take tackle youth related anti social behaviour and improve life chances of young people in less affluent areas.
- 4.2. The neighbourhood plan consultation has highlighted the need to invest more in the appearance, safety and well being of the town centre.
- 4.3. The process of engaging properly with the 18000 residents of the neighbourhood plan area and the wider town can be better achieved with more dedicated resource than we currently have.
- 4.4. There has been no opportunity to consult on the market operational changes except with our employees/agency staff.

5. Finance, Legal and Resource Implications

- 5.1. As set out above, the Council has the leeway to address these issues in this financial year. There may be consequences for the budget in 2026/7 and beyond of some of these commitments continuing; the cost of a market vehicle and youth services are likely to be multi-year commitments adding £25,000 to the budget annually.
- 5.2. The Council's policy on reserves is to increase reserves until they reach 50% of its annual budget – the general reserves currently stand at £140,000, which is 26% of the annual budget.

6. Climate change implications

All of the proposals above can have a positive impact on sustainability if handled correctly

7. Policy Implications

The Council's policies include the following:-

1. The Council will support the town centre – through encouraging and delivering facilities, through putting on events and markets, and will help to make the town centre safe, attractive, interesting and varied, with local businesses thriving alongside national retailers and service providers.
2. The Council will support measures to improve physical and mental health wellbeing, through its own services and in partnership with others.
3. The Council will support measures to improve public safety, road safety, and the safety of the night time economy in Kettering.
4. The Council will function as efficiently and effectively as it can, as a steward of the public money with which it is entrusted.
5. The Council will be an active and constructive partner to other statutory, voluntary and commercial organisations working for the benefit of Kettering and its residents; it will engage with local organisations to meet local challenges, to improve the welfare of its citizens and promote their interests

Background Papers

Minutes of Council January and March 2025

Reports to and Minutes of F&G Cttee 23rd April 2025

Financial accounts

