

KETTERING TOWN COUNCIL

REPORT FOR DECISION

Item No:- 22/017

Committee:-	ANNUAL COUNCIL
Date:-	18 th May 2022
Author:-	Martin Hammond, Clerk
Report Title:-	Public Spaces Protection Order Consultation
Wards Affected:-	William Knibb, Northfield, All Saints

1. Purpose of Report

To approve the Council's response to the consultation on the renewal of the PSPO for the town centre of Kettering.

2. Recommendations

That the draft response set out below be approved.

3. Information

- 3.1. At its meeting on 20th April, Council agreed that the draft response on NNC's PSPO consultation be submitted to this meeting for approval. The draft response is set out in para 3.3 below.
- 3.2. At the April meeting, members also questioned the rationale behind some provisions within the PSPO. The measure which allows the police to take home under 18s was introduced to prevent the exploitation of young people who had been gathering in the town centre and had been vulnerable to people providing drugs or putting them at risk in other ways. The measure in relation to begging was to end the aggressive begging that had been experienced by some shoppers and which was seen to be actively reducing footfall in the town centre, as had unregulated charity collection drives. The measure in relation to leafleting was to help prevent littering and fly-posting and again, because some leaflet distributors had strayed into causing a nuisance to shoppers.

3.3. Draft response

- 3.3.1. The Council supports the continued application of a PSPO covering Kettering town centre. The current PSPO has done much to make the town centre safer than it was, by suppressing aggressive begging and “chugging”, the misuse of spaces by drivers and the exploitation of young people. The PSPO should help make the town centre a safe place to visit, do business in, live in and move around. At the same time, it should curtail people’s liberties as little as possible consistent with the need to secure a safe environment. In particular, the Council should be encouraging pedestrian, cycle and other non motorised modes of travel and measures which give the impression that the town centre is a “no-go” area for bikes and skateboards is unhelpful.
- 3.3.2. The provisions of the PSPO need to be clearly set out for local people, through signage, information on websites and social media and through periodic publicity. To this end, the current signage is not fit for purpose and in some cases highly misleading, particularly where it seeks to describe the use of skateboards, bicycles and related means of travel, often in locations where the relevant provisions do not apply. We would ask that the signage be completely revised as a matter of urgency.
- 3.3.3. In terms of the area covered, the Council proposes the inclusion of Russell St within the PSPO area, on the basis that the area has suffered from anti-social behaviour caused by some residents, including on-street drinking and offensive behaviour.
- 3.3.4. The Council feels that the current provisions prohibiting skateboarding in designated areas of the PSPO is unduly restrictive. The main objective of any prohibition should be to safeguard personal safety and prevent damage to public property. Therefore the Council proposes that the current prohibition on skateboarding in two locations is replaced with a requirement that focuses instead on enforcement against the misuse of public spaces and property-including street furniture - by anyone using a skateboard, bicycle or related means of movement. It should also enable enforcement action where the personal safety of pedestrians is endangered, or where the peace and quiet of residents is unduly affected by people using bikes or skateboards. This essentially means having measures in the PSPO which focus on *behaviours* rather than banning particular *activities*. NNC will want to take advice itself about the wording of such a provision.
- 3.3.5. The Town Council recognises that part of the success of the PSPO to date has been the sensible application of enforcement practice which takes a case-sensitive approach rather than a blanket approach, for example in the way wardens have dealt with begging, distinguishing between genuinely homeless people and those who are not. We would urge that this approach is

maintained. The Town Council was disappointed to be told that the enforcement resource was significantly reduced on what it had been and would ask that visible enforcement time is restored so that the police are not the only enforcement service in the town centre.

4. Consultation

The Council is a consultee.

5. Finance, legal and resource implications

None for KTC.

6. Policy Implications

The Corporate Plan says:-

- a. 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.
- b. The Council will support measures to improve public safety, road safety, and the safety of the night time economy in Kettering
- c. The Council will support the development of walking and cycling infrastructure

Previous reports

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Background Papers

None