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KETTERING TOWN COUNCIL

REPORT FOR DECISION

Item No:- 22/065

Committee:-	Council
Date:-	14 th December 2022
Author:-	Martin Hammond, Town clerk
Report Title:-	Town Centre Planting Schemes
Wards Affected:-	William Knibb

1. Purpose of Report

To seek the Council's views on it taking responsibility for funding town centre planting schemes.

2. Recommendations

Council is recommended to consider if it wishes to take on this service, at a cost of £25,000, and whether this sum should be accommodated within the 23/24 budget by reducing other budget headings, or added to the precept.

3. Information

3.1. The former Kettering Borough Council provided several distinct town centre services which were not reflected at the same scale elsewhere in the wider North Northamptonshire area; these being

- The Christmas lights switch on
- Kettering by the Sea
- Town centre planting schemes



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- 3.2. Subject to final agreement for the 23/24 budget, the first two items are due to be picked up by this Council next financial year. The third item may be something members may wish to take a pre-emptive view on whilst they have the opportunity and whilst there is no statutory constraint on our tax raising powers. It is possible that North Northamptonshire Council may be unable to continue to commit the same resources on town centre planting which KBC provided, given that they do not do this in other towns, or, alternatively, that the current standard suffers over time.
- 3.3. For many years, the town centre of Kettering has benefited from a good coverage of planting schemes, comprising hanging baskets, baskets mounted on pedestrian railings and in planting beds in the town centre.
- 3.4. These have proved extremely popular with local people and the Town Council continues to receive, and pass on to NNC, letters and emails expressing appreciation for the displays. The displays continued throughout covid and clearly contributed to a greater sense of wellbeing than would otherwise have been the case.
- 3.5. As part of the public realm improvements part paid for by the Heritage Action Zone, a large number of new planting beds were built and located in High St, Meadow Rd and now Gold St. It is likely that NNC will continue to maintain these once they are fully planted up.
- 3.6. The cost of the service currently provided and potentially at risk is approximately £25,000. This comprises £12,000 for summer plants, £8,000 for winter plants and a 25% oncost for labour and maintenance costs (e.g. watering). Although there are no new infrastructure costs, there might be some renewal costs for new baskets and troughs over time.
- 3.7. The only way that these planting schemes could be managed in the short term is for NNC to continue to carry out the planting and maintenance it has historically done and to be recompensed by KTC. Their permission would be necessary anyway to utilise their lamp-posts, railings and tubs to continue the scheme.
- 3.8. In the longer term, the Council could seek to secure the service through competitive tender, although that runs the risk of a significantly increased cost, compared to NNC continuing to provide the labour and materials as an incidental part of their wider grounds maintenance activities.
- 3.9. The baskets and troughs would need to be branded up as something KTC has paid for, alongside the NNC logo.

4. Consultation and Engagement

- 4.1. The prospect of taking up this service emerged after the budget consultation had begun. So no specific consultation has been carried out. A virtual consultation could take place over the next four weeks if desired.
- 4.2. During the budget consultation exercise, the Civic Society and one other person specifically mentioned the benefits of retaining the floral displays if NNC could not.

5. Finance, Legal and Resource Implications

- 5.1. If members wish to add to the budget for 2023/4, then the cost of £25000 equates to £1.56 on the average (band D) council tax per year.
- 5.2. For planning purposes, a three year service level agreement with NNC would be advised

6. Policy Implications

If this service was taken up, the Corporate plan would need to be revised to reflect it.

At present, the corporate plan includes three relevant policies:-

Economy

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.

Health and Community

2. The Council will support measures to improve physical and mental health wellbeing, particularly in the light of the impacts of covid 19, through its own services and in partnership with others.

Sustainability

3. The Council will, within its own remit, strive to protect, restore and enhance our local biodiversity and the natural world that surrounds us and of which we are all a part and



will strive to take the most sustainable approach to the design and delivery of its own services

Background Papers

None

8.12.22