

KETTERING TOWN COUNCIL BUDGET AND PRECEPT FOR 2022-2023 FINANCIAL YEAR

CONSULTION RESPONSE FORM

Heading	Our Questions	Your ideas and thoughts (each box expands as required)
<p>The Corporate Plan</p> <p>Please see the document here:-</p> <p>kettering-town-council-corporate-plan-v3.pdf (ketteringtowncouncil.gov.uk)</p>	<p>Does the Plan focus on the right things?</p> <p>Are there things that should be removed from it?</p> <p>Are there things which aren't mentioned but should be?</p>	<p>From the KTC Corporate Plan: "The Council will support the development of walking and cycling infrastructure and the growth of public transport."</p> <p>This is a very good to set out to do. But there are no tasks in the plan, and no budget, to achieve this objective.</p> <p>For example, we have, other than some of our other Northamptonshire neighbours, one of the worst bus services of all urban areas in the entire nation. The Railway Station is, essentially, divorced from the rest of the town centre and there are few bus services connecting it with anywhere else in town or with the rest of the town centre. Walking is impeded, for example around the Ise Lodge, by there being insufficient pedestrian crossings over main roads. Cycling is impeded by the poor quality of the road surfaces throughout the town, poor design of the few cycle lanes, very high incidence of bike crime in the town centre and the complete absence of secure cycle parking. One would have thought that all of these would have merited some attention from KTC, but, it would seem, sadly, not.</p>
<p>The budget and precept</p> <p>We are planning to spend £350,000 this year, which will cost a Band D household £19.50 over the full year – 37.5p/week.</p> <p>Here is the summary</p>	<p>Is this the right amount?</p> <p>Do you agree with the headings in the budget ?</p>	<p>I don't have any problems with the precept level that is proposed. In general, councils in Northamptonshire (and the Police and Fire Commissioner) attempt to "dine out" on low precepts (and, quite fraudulently, claim that they offer good value as a result), so, by comparison I don't object to KTC attempting to set this level higher, provided that it uses the money carefully, efficiently and to the benefit of ALL the local population. Low precepts tend to result in public bodies restricting themselves to statutory expenditure only. Since the statutory expenditure is almost exclusively directed towards only a very small proportion of the population, then the majority receive few services, worth</p>

<p>budget-v4.pdf (ketteringtowncouncil.gov.uk)</p>	<p>Are there any lines in the budget which should be changed?</p>	<p>much less than the amount that they pay, and therefore receive very poor value. For example, in my own case, NNC collects about £1400 per year via the council tax on my house, but only supplies me with services (dustbins and street lighting) worth about £80 per year – the very definition of poor value!</p> <p>To summarise, therefore, I have no objection to the proposed precept, PROVIDED THAT the great majority of services that it pays for are efficiently and intelligently provided and widely available to the whole of the local population.</p>
<p>Public toilets – the temporary toilets in Meadow Rd have proved popular, but North Northamptonshire Council is removing them from March. We intend to provide ladies, gents, disabled and baby changing facilities in a steel unit - clad in timber</p>	<p>Where might new toilets best be located?</p> <p>Should we include other features?</p> <p>What times should it be available?</p>	<p>There are already public toilets in the Newlands Centre. Unless they have been closed, I do not see why we should be building more, and if they have been closed, then it would be more cost-effective for the council to “lean on” the Newlands Centre management to reopen them.</p> <p>Accordingly, I regard the proposal to build new public toilets as an irresponsible and ill-informed waste of public money, inconsistent with the high standards that are required of a public body seeking to increase its income and expenditure, and I would therefore prefer this project to be cancelled immediately.</p>
<p>What sort of work would you like to see our grants scheme support? We haven’t written the rules yet and would welcome your thoughts. We are aiming to make grants up to a ceiling of £2500 per project or organization.</p>	<p>What should the grant scheme focus on?</p> <p>What is the right upper ceiling?</p>	<p>No money at all to groups that have, as a main or subsidiary objective, political or quasi-political campaigning, or where leaders of the groups have a history in the recent past of political campaigning. No money also for groups that are led by current or recent former councillors or officers of political parties.</p>

<p>What sort of public events do you want to see provided?</p>	<p>What sort of events should we prioritise and for whom?</p> <p>Which venues should we work with?</p> <p>Apart from the town centre, where should events take place?</p>	<p>To quote the KTC Corporate Plan “The Council will support the ... growth of public transport.” To this end, therefore...</p> <p>No event should be sponsored which, by its timing or location, is inaccessible (for arrival or return home) by public transport to the majority of the population in the area covered by the council. Thus, because of the way the local bus system currently operates, no events should be sponsored at any time on Sundays, no events in the evenings and, for example, no events at all at the Lighthouse Theatre/Conference Centre complex.</p>
<p>How can we best use our money to support community resilience? We want residents in the town to be healthy, have good mental health, be active, for young people to be kept away from drugs and anti-social behaviour , for people to be safe in their homes and streets, and to encourage people to be as sustainable as possible in how they live their lives.</p>	<p>Is this list the right “long list” for support?</p> <p>What should be our priorities be for this new fund in 2022-23?</p> <p>Should we support the Levelling Up programmes with this fund?</p>	<p>“...for young people to be kept away from drugs and anti-social behaviour...” Actually, we surely want everyone kept away from drugs and anti-social behaviour, or are we saying that these are acceptable activities for people “over a certain age”?</p>
<p>Community Lottery This will raise money for good causes locally – 58% of proceeds will go to good causes and the rest to prize money and administrative costs</p>	<p>What good causes should we prioritise?</p>	<p>I do not support this lottery idea, I will not be participating in it and I do not think it should go ahead.</p>
<p>Are their local facilities in need of renewal? We’ve got a modest</p>	<p>Is this a good use of money?</p>	

<p>fund to improve facilities across town.</p>	<p>Should we be looking to focus on specific things which need most attention?</p>	
<p>The town's general market Covid meant the market has shrunk to almost nothing.</p>	<p>Should effort be put into reviving it?</p> <p>What does a good market look like in your view?</p>	<p>Even before Covid, the Kettering Market had declined to being an untidy and shaming array of dirty and unhygienic stalls, some, horrifyingly, even selling food apparently intended for human consumption, and the rest being a trading standards nightmare (such as dangerous second-hand electrical equipment and silver plate being sold as solid silver). As such, it bore no relation to the market defined in Kettering's market charter and should have been closed down.</p> <p>That said, a revised and overhauled market would appear to represent the only opportunity for the Council to implement directly an improvement in the town centre's retail offering. There are successful and thriving purpose-built covered markets in many towns (to name the ones I am most familiar with, Barrow in Furness, Stevenage, Market Harborough and Bedford) and the council should be setting its target at this level of ambition. A properly organised and managed covered market would provide opportunities for locals to set up small scale businesses at reduced risk, thus creating job opportunities and opportunities for enterprise to thrive. It would also provide a much-needed "draw" into the town centre, having the potential to restore at least some of the retail diversity that has been lost over the last few years.</p>
<p>Planting trees and encouraging bio-diversity.</p>	<p>Where should trees be planted to have best effect.</p>	

	Do you have land that might be suitable?	
General comments		<p>Anything else you would like to say? Say it here.</p> <p>I refer to the project to improve Kettering Railway Station by making it into a local public transport hub and interchange between bus and train (requiring changes to the existing physical infrastructure, changes to bus routes and an increase in the number of buses and the period through the day in which they operate). I have in my possession three relevant documents. The first two are the Kettering Town Centre Area Action Plan (KBC) and the Kettering Transport Plan (NCC), in both of which, the hub figured significantly as a core part of the improvements which these documents anticipated. The third is the Kettering Town Centre Delivery Plan (KBC), which makes no mention of the hub at all. I can only imagine that the proposal to improve bus services and bus-train connectivity at the railway station has been dropped, though it would have been, at least, polite if the various bodies involved had said so more explicitly. The current state of bus services at the railway station is that there are fewer buses, and the window in the day during which they operate, is narrower than at any time during the period when the creation of this hub appeared to be a possibility.</p> <p>I would offer the following remarks. Public transport in Kettering is under-invested, dirty, unreliable, expensive and insufficiently frequent to be useful for the majority of the local population. As a result, enterprise and the growth of job opportunities are being stifled, the local road system (designed for nothing newer than 1930s levels of use) is, at times, overcrowded with cars and air pollution continues unabated. Kettering needs a better public transport system. A particular problem is the railway station, which is, effectively, divorced from the rest of the town centre and, so far as the bus system is concerned, most of the rest of the town also. Having more buses going from more parts of the residential areas of the</p>

		<p>town to the station, and more buses travelling between the retail centre of town and the station would start to give us an integrated transport system which would support jobs, commerce and wealth creation.</p> <p>Population mobility drives economic growth. I have no interest at all in the Town Council if it is not smart enough to realise this, and not ambitious enough to take it on as a project. A public transport hub at the railway station, and improved bus services to the station and around the town as a whole, is not the be-all and end-all of the regeneration that the town requires, but it would play an integral part in an improved Kettering. If the Town Council continues KBC's lead and regards this project as dropped, then that would be a very great shame.</p> <p>At a very much lower level of ambition, there is no secure cycle storage in the town centre, and a high level of cycle crime. A secure cycle storage facility would be an excellent use of one of the many abandoned retail units in the town centre. My advice would be don't even think about investing in special expensive equipment to store the bikes in, as at the railway station. Just have it properly monitored by staff who have had a modicum of training and get a decent insurance policy to cover theft, damage and other losses. This would be an excellent alternative use of the money that you have currently allocated to the foolish town centre toilets project.</p> <p>Kettering suffers from numerous problems A few of these are historic or geographic (e.g. the location of the railway station relative to the rest of town. Most are the legacy of poor civic decision-making in recent decades – for example, locating the theatre/exhibition/conference centre and the cinema a long way from the centre of town. Covid has accelerated the decline of the retail aspect of the town. The legacy of the poor decisions made earlier is that it is beyond the control of the council to arrest this decline, which is probably now terminal. Reassignment of the town centre space as a restaurant and cultural area, and to increase evening trade was</p>
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		<p>a credible idea, but undermined by the absence of an evening draw for people, other than the restaurants themselves, and the absence of public transport to bring people in and then back home again afterwards. The relatively high level of crime and antisocial behaviour, and the rather threatening atmosphere, in the town after dark also are strong deterrents to exactly the kind of visitors that the “restaurant and cultural quarter” idea sought to attract.</p> <p>Against this background, the Town Council needs something that it currently doesn’t have, which is a vision of the future for Kettering. Are we going to abandon retail in the town centre, or to plan some measures which may, quite usefully, slow down its decline? Are we going to repurpose the town centre for the restaurant/cultural/night time offering? If so, we need to get to grips with all the problems listed above. Are we going to sort out the many public transport problems, or are we just going to struggle through with the congestion and pollution problems of the car, until people are forced, by one pressure or another, to stop using them, and then abandon Kettering as some sort of ghost town? Competent answers to these questions require vision, and the civic leadership that the council claims to aspire to but does not have at the moment. But if the council ducks these challenges, as its predecessors have, then it might just as well re-name itself the Kettering Allotment, Public Toilets and Small Grants Society and mark out where it wishes its grave to be placed.</p>
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PLEASE SEND TO;- clerk@ketteringtowncouncil.gov.uk or post or hand in to

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