

COUNCIL MEETING

Wednesday 12 November 2025

AGENDA ITEM 9 – WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 12

1	Question from Councillor H Zaman to the Cabinet Member for Housing and Transport – Councillor Crook “Can the Cabinet Member outline how the Council applies its homelessness duties under the Housing Act 1996 and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 to individuals leaving prison or with previous convictions, and whether any specific guidance or assessment criteria are used in such cases?” <u>Cabinet Member Response</u> The Council’s Housing Solutions Service is responsible for delivering the local authority’s homeless duties under current legislative framework. For all eligible applicants who are either homeless or threatened with homelessness, including individuals leaving prison and those who have previous criminal convictions, the service adheres to all relevant legislation and in particular, undertakes a homeless assessment, reaches a decision on what if any housing duties are owed and generates a personal housing plan which outlines steps that the individual and the Council will take in order to resolve any housing issues. In line with the Statutory Homeless Code of Guidance, the Council does not adopt a blanket policy in relation to duties owed to prison leavers or ex-offenders. Instead, a holistic case by case assessment is undertaken with full reference to that statutory guidance. Housing Solutions have a dedicated officer who has close links with local prison and probation services, and a well-established pathway for receiving statutory ‘duty to refer’ notifications from those partner agencies. This ensures that wherever possible, homeless assessments are done in advance of individuals leaving prison, in order to identify what duties are owed and to assist with identification of realistic housing options to minimise the risk of release from prison into street homelessness. Where it is determined that no duty arises to provide temporary accommodation for homeless prison leavers, the service works closely in partnership with delivery partners including Kirklees Better Outcomes Partnership (KBOP) and the Probation Service to provide advice, guidance and support to access alternative accommodation which may include supported housing, private rented accommodation or other assistance.
2	Question from Councillor H Zaman to the Cabinet Member for Housing and Transport – Councillor Crook “Under the recently approved variation to the Tenancy Agreement, the Council is introducing a grounds maintenance service charge for council tenants living on estates with communal areas. Given that the Council has no legal power to levy equivalent charges on private homeowners or private tenants living on the same estates, and has historically funded estate maintenance through the Housing Revenue Account or general funds, can the Cabinet Member explain why the Council has chosen to recover these costs only from council tenants, and whether the administration considers this approach to be fair and equitable

	across mixed-tenure communities?” <u>Cabinet Member Response</u> The annual expenditure for maintaining communal grounds across Homes & Neighbourhoods estates amounts to £1.7 million. Continuing to fully subsidise this service is not financially viable for the council's ring fenced housing revenue account, particularly given the ongoing need to invest in its housing stock. To provide some perspective, income of £1.7 million would fund the installation of approximately 485 new bathrooms or 377 new kitchens. Therefore, after consultation with tenants and leaseholders, including consultation about the tenancy agreement changes, the council has decided to implement a service charge specifically for communal grounds maintenance. This new charge is restricted to the upkeep of communal land located within estates where council tenants live. The upkeep of individual house gardens remains the sole responsibility of the tenant. As the number of right to buy sales has increased across many estates, it is essential to highlight that service charges cannot legally be imposed on existing owner occupiers or private tenants. To ensure fairness, tenants are not expected to pay the entire cost of communal grounds maintenance. Instead, the charge is calculated according to the original number of council properties that were built within each estate.
3	Question from Councillor Scott to the Leader of the Council – Councillor Pattison (Referred to Councillor Kendrick) “A Labour MP in Lancashire, Andy MacNae, has written publicly to his Council making it clear that the Best Start Family Hubs funding is development funding, not the return of Sure Start, and that councils must still apply, select locations and prioritise deprived areas. You have instead stated that “Sure Start is returning to Kirklees”, despite the fact that the funding awarded is £190,729 — an amount which would not run a Sure Start centre for a year, is part of the existing Family Hub programme first introduced under the Conservative Government, and with no capital budget, site or staffing plan announced for any Kirklees town. Why was this presented to the public as the return of Sure Start, rather than explained in the more accurate and transparent terms used by your Labour colleague in Lancashire?” <u>Cabinet Member Response</u> Here in Kirklees, we are committed to rolling out the Government expectations as set out in the ‘Best Start’ Family Hubs development grant guidance Oct 2025. Our Best Start approach will build on our families together hub model offering multiagency support to families at the earliest possible opportunity. The initial allocation of the £190, 729 development grants will help to build on our established family support approach but has a specific focus on 0–5-year-olds reaching a ‘Good Level of Development’ giving them the best start in life. It was this focus The Leader was referring to as being in the spirit of the previous sure start programmes which is why she referred to “sure start” style

	services. It is also worth noting this is only the first of the Best Start hubs with government planning further expansion and provision over the next 3 years. We are in the process of identifying one of our main Families Together buildings as the first Best Start Family hub for the development grant phase, this is likely to be in one of the most deprived areas of Kirklees, and will give us the opportunity to then scale this across the whole district as further funding is released. Families Together already offers early support to our parents, and under Best Start, we will further develop this by offering a suite of home learning environment programmes, working with key partners to include early years providers, health visiting services, Voluntary Sector, as well as stay and play providers. To enable us to deliver against the Best Start development grant requirements, and plan for the subsequent 3 years of funding we will work closely with our local partners, parents and our local communities.
4	Question from Councillor Scott to the Cabinet Member for Finance and Regeneration – Councillor Turner “The Dewsbury Arcade Group was originally established to support the restoration and operation of the Dewsbury Arcade. However, public materials now suggest the Group is engaging in wider town centre regeneration activity, including partnerships beyond the Arcade itself. Given that this is a publicly funded regeneration project under the oversight of the Dewsbury Town Board and that Kirklees Cabinet ratifies key decisions can the Cabinet Member clarify what formal governance structures define the role and remit of the Dewsbury Arcade Group, particularly where their activities extend beyond the Arcade building, and how the Council will ensure democratic oversight, transparency, and political neutrality when public funding is involved and the Group’s Chair is a former Labour councillor seeking re-election?” <u>Cabinet Member Response</u> The Dewsbury Arcade Group is a separate organisation, which manages its own governance process, decisions relating to its membership and activities the Group may want to undertake. The Dewsbury Arcade regeneration project is one that is being delivered through the Dewsbury Neighbourhood Board, in collaboration with the council who acquired the building in 2020 and are leading on the construction works. This work is funded by £4.5million from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, grants from the Dewsbury Neighbourhood Board and West Yorkshire Combined Authority, support from the government’s Getting Building Fund, and capital funding from the Council. Once the renovations are complete (Spring 2026), the Arcade will be taken on and managed by the Arcade Group without further financial input from the Council.
5	Question from Councillor Scott to the Leader of the Council – Councillor Pattison

	"Given the significant public concern and media attention surrounding certain development sites, and recognising that some aspects may be subject to enforcement and therefore cannot be discussed in detail, can the Cabinet Member outline how councillors are to be supported and briefed so they can lawfully discharge their safeguarding, corporate parenting and public accountability duties while maintaining public confidence in the Council's leadership and communication?" <u>Leader Response</u> Appropriate councillors are kept up to date by officers through a combination of regular written briefings and verbal updates. These are provided to Portfolio Holders and Ward Councillors when there is an issue of significance, ensuring that those with direct responsibilities or local knowledge are informed in a timely and accurate manner. Where the nature of the issue warrants it, particularly in cases of heightened public concern or media attention affecting the whole of the Borough, the Chief Executive or other senior officers will brief all Political Group Leaders. This ensures wider political oversight and enables cross-party awareness of developments, which is essential for maintaining transparency and trust. It is important to emphasise that such matters, especially those involving safeguarding, corporate parenting, or enforcement, must be handled with care and professionalism. These are not issues that should be politicised. The Council has a collective responsibility to ensure that all elected members are equipped to discharge their statutory duties lawfully and with integrity as appropriate.
6	Question from Councillor Taylor to the Leader of the Council – Councillor Pattison "Please could the Leader update Council on what meetings she has held with the Farming Community in the last 6 months?" <u>Leader Response</u> The farming community are an important part of our economy and local communities. I met with the local branch of the National Farmers Union on the 24th September along with the Deputy Leader.
7	Question from Councillor Taylor to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Waste – Councillor Hawkins "How long should it take for the Council to repair a collapsed wall which it is responsible for?" <u>Cabinet Member response</u> Whilst this seems a simple and straight forward question the differing circumstances of a collapsed wall makes the answer quite complicated. The Highway Service is responsible for the maintenance of several hundred kilometres of highway retaining walls. To ensure the most cost-effective use of the public purse and available funding we prioritise collapsed highway walls that are safety critical.

	The Council is under a duty to make safe the highway and ensure safe passage for highway users. If a collapsed wall does not impact the safety of the highway and its users, then the Council is under no statutory obligation to rebuild the wall. The length of time it takes to repair a safety critical wall can vary widely depending on the extent and the severity of the collapse. If the damage is relatively small and does not require any structural design work, then it can be reinstated relatively quickly subject to contractor availability. For more significant wall collapses due to landslips or embankment failures for example, this repair can often take much longer as the cause of failure needs to be established through extensive ground investigation works before feasible options can be considered and designed - and the necessary funding secured which can be significant. There are also instances where the wall collapse is caused by third parties in road traffic accidents, in these circumstances the Council is required to engage with the third party or their insurers to establish liability and secure authorisation before proceeding with the implementation of the necessary remedial works, and the subsequent recovery of its associated costs, which again can be significant. So there is no simple or single answer to the question and it depends on the circumstances. However, I can assure colleagues that the Highway Service will ensure that all such sites remain safe for the highway users pending the works being carried out.
8	Question from Councillor Taylor to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Waste – Councillor Hawkins “Many of our schools have warning signs which should flash at the beginning and the end of the school day, why are so many of them not working and why can I not get an answer or response to my query about them?” <u>Cabinet Member response</u> School warning signs play an important safety role and I’d like to reassure Members that the Council is committed to attending and resolving any issues. To give some context, the warning lights are manually programmed by highways staff for the entire school year ahead. Part of the difficulty with these signs is the technology is complex and so fault finding can require a few teams to be involved and hence they can take some time to resolve. At the beginning of the school year, as you would expect, the signs were operating normally but unfortunately faults do occur over time. When officers are made aware they will inspect the sign and any repairs are carried out. Repairs involving power supply issue or requiring manufacturer support can and do add to the time taken to complete the repair. I would encourage Members to continue to report any faults with these signs to Officers so they can be attended to at the earliest opportunity and in a timely fashion.
9	Question from Councillor Armer to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Waste – Councillor Hawkins

	“Last week, whilst making enquiries about missed grey bin collections in my ward, I was informed that a particular round had been allocated to an outside contractor. How many times have such contractors been used in the last twelve months?” <u>Cabinet Member response</u> Thank you for your question. I can confirm that the waste service does not engage external contractors for the collection of domestic waste. All routine domestic waste collection activities are managed and delivered by our in-house team. In situations where staffing levels are temporarily reduced, such as due to staff sickness, annual leave, or unfilled vacancies, the service may utilise agency drivers or loaders. These agency staff are employed on a short-term basis to cover gaps in the workforce and to guarantee that scheduled rounds are completed without interruption. This approach allows the service to maintain reliability and minimise the risk of missed collections for residents, even during periods of temporary staff shortages. Additionally, to ensure that the fleet remains operational and fully equipped, the waste service occasionally hires additional vehicles. This is typically done when existing vehicles are unavailable due to mechanical breakdowns or during periods of scheduled maintenance and servicing. By hiring replacement vehicles as needed, the service can continue to operate at full capacity, thereby maintaining regular collection schedules and minimising disruption to the public. It is important to emphasise that, despite these contingency arrangements involving agency personnel and hired vehicles, all waste collection operations remain under the direct control and management of the council's internal waste service team. At no point is the responsibility for collecting domestic waste outsourced to external contractors. This ensures that service standards, accountability, and direct communication with residents are consistently upheld.
10	Question from Councillor Armer to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Waste – Councillor Hawkins “I was informed last week that no less than five bin wagons were out of service at the same time. This is despite the council having recently invested in a new fleet of cleansing vehicles at considerable expense. How reliable is this new fleet?” <u>Cabinet Member response</u> Thank you for your question, Cllr Armer. The Council has received delivery of new vehicles in 2023/24, replacing 20% of the existing waste collection fleet. This was the first step in modernising our cleansing vehicle provision, to improve the reliability and efficiency of waste collection services. The new fleet is reliable and operates efficiently and effectively. The remaining 80% of the fleet is a combination of hired and older council-owned vehicles. Naturally as vehicles age, they inevitably require increased levels of maintenance and may be more susceptible to unexpected breakdowns. I can further confirm that the Council has placed orders to replace a substantial number of vehicles for the next phase of the fleet modernisation programme that

	will give greater resilience to the performance of the fleet as a whole. In the interim, the Council will continue to operate a mixed fleet, of new and older vehicles, alongside hired units to maintain service continuity. In terms of vehicle maintenance, it is important to highlight that, beyond unforeseen mechanical repairs, all vehicles are subject to routine scheduled servicing and mandatory MOT testing. These procedures are essential for ensuring the ongoing safety and performance of the fleet. While the Council strives to minimise downtime, it is possible for vehicles to remain out of service for longer periods if additional faults or necessary repairs are identified during these checks. Waste collection vehicles, in particular, are subject to intensive daily use, which can accelerate wear and tear and increase the frequency of required maintenance. The Council is committed to ongoing fleet renewal and robust maintenance regimes to ensure the best possible service for residents and will continue to monitor reliability closely as further new vehicles are delivered.
11	Question from Councillor Armer to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Waste – Councillor Hawkins “Does the Council carry out the repair and maintenance of bin wagons in-house?” <u>Cabinet Member response</u> The Council undertakes the maintenance and repair of its fleet of bin wagons internally, ensuring that all routine servicing, inspections, and necessary repairs are managed by the Council’s own dedicated team of technicians. This in-house approach covers every aspect of the vehicles’ upkeep, including scheduled maintenance, MOT preparation and testing, and the resolution of any mechanical or electrical faults that may arise during the vehicles’ operational life. In circumstances where the internal capacity is stretched, for example, during periods of high demand or when multiple vehicles require attention at once, the Council supplements its resources by working with local garages and contractors. By utilising these external partners, the Council is able to relieve pressure on its own team, ensuring that vehicle maintenance and repair schedules remain on track, and service standards are upheld. In instances where any faults or servicing need fall within the manufacturer’s warranty period, these are addressed directly by the manufacturer or their authorised service centres, in accordance with the terms of the warranty agreement. Once this warranty period concludes, responsibility for the ongoing care of the vehicle reverts fully to the Council’s in-house team.
12	Question from Councillor Munro to the Cabinet Member for Finance and Regeneration – Councillor Turner “How is the order of agenda items decided for planning committees?” <u>Cabinet Member response</u> The agenda for Planning Committees is set out at the start of the report packs. After opening the meeting, the Chair will go through the standard agenda items

	in line with all other Council Committees. Once these procedural items have been dealt with the Chair will move on to the applications that are to be considered by the Committee. The Chair in consultation with Planning Officers decide what running order the planning applications are heard in. It is normal practise to place planning applications with the anticipated greatest level of public interest first so any members of the public attending the Committee meeting are not kept waiting for items they may not be interested in. It is also possible on the day of the Committee for the Chair to adjust the running order of the planning applications if any circumstances warrant a reordering.
13	Question from Councillor R Smith to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Waste – Councillor Hawkins “What is the Council proposing to do to address speeding motorists which is a constant source of worry to residents in my Ward?” <u>Cabinet Member response</u> Kirklees Council is member of the West Yorkshire Casualty Prevention Partnership and works closely with the Partnership in targeting speeding motorists. We work with Members and the community to get their feedback but also review any traffic data for evidence of speeding. We will assess and determine if the location is suitable for enforcement (safe parking / clear sightlines) and if so, the location is added into our programme. Where an enforcement camera doesn't meet the criteria, the Partnership considers if neighbourhood policing support would help. Requests for locations to be considered can be made via the Council's website under the Safety Camera Partnership page. Measures to influence behaviour change are important which is why we deploy Speed Indicator Devices (in discussion with Ward Cllrs) on our roads. Helping to remind drivers to drive within the safe speed limits. At locations where speeds are causing injury collisions then we will look to install engineering measures (e.g. traffic calming) to address the issue and to prevent further collisions from occurring. In terms of getting the message out about speeding and impact on road safety, we aim to continue our local radio campaigns alongside WY colleagues, to remind drivers of the varying road safety concerns. Education to encourage behaviour change remains a key part of the solution. We continue to work in schools and colleges to educate our young residents about the dangers of speed and the impact speed can have on our communities. We have recently secured a new interactive road safety vehicle, codename 'COLE' that provides an interactive experience to help young drivers understand the risk of speeding and how to manage distractions in vehicle.

14	Question from Councillor R Smith to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Waste – Councillor Hawkins “What action is the council taking to work with Yorkshire Water in the Kirkburton area to ensure that repairs are made in a timely fashion and roads reopened as soon as possible after a leak has been identified?” <u>Cabinet Member response</u> The Council’s Streetworks Team officers meet regularly with Yorkshire Water to enable them to access their apparatus and deal with faults and leaks as quickly as possible, whilst trying to minimise the impact on the highway network. The Council is also mindful of the ongoing water shortage situation and assesses permits promptly to enable Yorkshire Water to access these locations without unnecessary delay. Each permit application is assessed on an individual basis. The nature and location of the activity determines the type of traffic control needed – sometimes the road can remain open using traffic control measures, but often the road must be closed for the safety of the public and the workforce attending the repair. Where road closures are required, we assess the proposed diversion route, notify local Cllrs, and may instruct an alternative, more appropriate route that avoids known local restrictions, areas of concern such as outside a school, or for the avoidance of other highway works. Where we have unexpected burst water mains or any other emergency situation, these assessments can only be undertaken whilst the event is ongoing. All actions and communications are then reactive, making it difficult to reach all those affected at short notice. These emergency incidents can result in additional damage to the highway surrounding the initial burst, which then also need to be repaired before the road can be reopened, to ensure the safety of all highway users. In most of these incidents, Yorkshire Water will carry out the consequential damage repairs but in some circumstances the Council will consider using its own Highways teams to help complete these works, so that the road can reopen sooner. In order to further incentivise fast completion of these types of repairs, the council has requested powers from the Secretary of State to take on powers to charge utility and other operators under a Lane Rental scheme. This will allow charges of up to £2500 per day to be levied for disruption on our traffic sensitive road network. Evidence from areas where similar schemes have already been implemented is that disruption is significantly reduced. Over the past 12-months there have been 32 instances of works undertaken by Yorkshire Water in the Kirkburton area using positive traffic management (temporary traffic signals or road closures controls). The average duration for these works is 5.3 days. The most impactful locations identified as being 7 or more calendar days to complete, are listed here - Q14 roadworks schedule landscape.pdf All these works are now complete.
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15	Question from Councillor Bellamy to the Cabinet Member for Finance and Regeneration – Councillor Turner “Residents in the Holme Valley North Ward have reported repeated difficulties when submitting planning enforcement complaints, with some being told that no record exists of their reports — even when screenshots or email confirmations have been provided. Can the Cabinet Member confirm what quality assurance measures are in place to ensure that all online and email-based planning enforcement complaints are properly logged, acknowledged, and tracked to resolution?” <u>Cabinet Member response</u> Complaints about breaches of planning control should be sent to planning.enforcement@kirklees.gov.uk this inbox is monitored by the Compliance Team and is checked daily. There are several hundred emails in the inbox as this email address is used by ongoing complainants requesting updates or providing more information about existing cases which can make a manual check of the inbox a protracted exercise. New requests for investigations are taken from this inbox by the Team and allocated to officers. Therefore, there is processes to identify new complaints received to the Compliance Team. Acknowledgement emails or letters are sent to complainants once a case file has been created Updates on live compliance cases can be found online at the council's webpage using the unique reference number provided in the acknowledgement or by advance search methods such as property address. It is important to note that investigations into breaches of planning control can take a long time due to the complexity of the matters, need for investigation and interviews and the serving of Notices giving reasonable periods of time for the breach to be resolved. There are also rights of appeal against enforcement notices. Court proceedings may have to be undertaken to finally resolve matters which all add to the length of time cases can take to conclude.
16	Question from Councillor Bellamy to the Cabinet Member for Housing and Transport – Councillor Crook “I have recently been supporting a constituent — a single parent with a young child — who is living in severely overcrowded and unsuitable conditions in social housing. Despite the presence of damp, inadequate space, and significant impacts on both mental health and family wellbeing, their banding remains low, and there appears to be limited flexibility in the system to respond to exceptional family circumstances. Could the Cabinet Member outline what processes are in place to ensure that single parents and families with children living in overcrowded or unsuitable council housing are prioritised appropriately, particularly where there are health, safety, or wellbeing concerns, and whether there are any plans to review how such cases are assessed and supported through the allocations and banding process?”

	<u>Cabinet Member response</u> Awaab's Law, effective from 27 October 2025, imposes strict statutory duties on social landlords to address damp, mould, and condensation (DMC) promptly. Homes & Neighbourhoods has implemented comprehensive service redesign, investment, and workforce development to comply. When DMC is reported, tenant and household vulnerabilities are considered in assessing and prioritising remedial works. It is essential where DMC issues are present in a council property they are reported to Homes & Neighbourhoods for investigation and resolution. Where DMC is present in a social home that is not a council property, this should be reported to the landlord of that property directly. Due to significant pressures on the social housing sector, Kirklees Council's Allocations Policy ensures all housing applications are assessed fairly according to relative need and uses a banding system (A: highest need to E: non-urgent) to ensure homes are allocated to those with the greatest need first. Overcrowded applicants in council or housing association homes are generally placed in Band C (medium need). However, applicants with additional health or wellbeing concerns should inform the council and provide relevant information for consideration, which may affect their banding.
17	Question from Councillor Bellamy to the Cabinet Member for Housing and Transport – Councillor Crook "I understand that Kirklees Council has introduced a service charge for communal grounds maintenance (grass cutting, hedge trimming, weed control etc) for council tenants, effective April 2025. Can the Cabinet Member confirm how the charge will be applied across different estates, how the amount is calculated, and what measures are in place to ensure transparency, fairness, and value for tenants paying this additional cost?" <u>Cabinet Member response</u> The annual expenditure for maintaining communal grounds across Homes & Neighbourhoods estates amounts to £1.7 million. Continuing to fully subsidise this service from the council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is not financially viable, particularly given the ongoing need to invest in its housing stock. To provide some perspective, income of £1.7 million would fund the installation of approximately 485 new bathrooms or 377 new kitchens. Therefore, after consultation with tenants and leaseholders, including consultation about the tenancy agreement changes, the council has decided to implement a service charge specifically for communal grounds maintenance. This new charge is restricted to the upkeep of communal land located within estates where council tenants live. The upkeep of individual house gardens remains the sole responsibility of the tenant. The costs for Grounds Maintenance services are calculated by the amount of green space that needs maintaining within the boundary area of specific estates within Homes & Neighbourhoods owned land. As the number of right to buy sales has increased across many estates, it is essential to highlight that service

	charges cannot legally be imposed on existing owner occupiers or private tenants. To ensure fairness, tenants are not expected to pay the entire cost of communal grounds maintenance. Instead, the charge is calculated according to the original number of council properties that were built within each estate. For example, if an estate was initially built with 14 properties and 7 have since been sold, each of the remaining 7 council tenancies is responsible for 1/14th of the total cost. Homes & Neighbourhoods, and the Highways & Streetscene services are working collaboratively to implement a programme of pro-active quality checks for grounds maintenance. This will ensure grounds maintenance services are good and delivered in a consistent way across the district.
18	Question from Councillor Hall to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Waste – Councillor Hawkins “The Yew Tree junction of Norristhorpe Lane, Huddersfield Road and Lumb Lane in Liversedge is very congested, largely due to the position of vehicles turning right out of Lumb Lane and traffic build-up on Huddersfield Road. Will the Cabinet Member please direct highways officers to investigate the traffic movements at this junction?” <u>Cabinet Member response</u> The Yew Tree Junction was previously upgraded using advanced software to improve traffic flow, giving priority to roads with longer queues. However, when traffic is heavy on all approaches, the system can only do so much because it must allow all roads a fair chance to move. Highways officers are aware of the issue, and I will ask them to review it further.
19	Question from Councillor Hall to the Cabinet Member for Finance and Regeneration – Councillor Turner “Can we please have an update on the sale of council land at the former R M Grylls school and the former Gomersal First School?” <u>Cabinet Member response</u> As I’m sure Cllr Hall will be aware, both sites were declared surplus by Cabinet in June 2023 with authority delegated to the Strategic Director for Growth and Regeneration in consultation with the relevant portfolio holder (which is me) and the Service Director for Legal, Governance and Commissioning to dispose of the sites to support the Council’s income targets, irrespective of the value of the sites and on such terms as officers deem most appropriate. Since June 2023, officers have been assessing the sites for disposal and keeping me regularly informed. With respect to the former Gomersal First School site, this is currently being marketed for offers in excess of £1m by Eddison's as agents for the council for an unconditional disposal under a best and final offer process with the highest offer being successful. The best and final offers will be received on the 17th December 2025, and we are hopeful that the Council will be able to enter into contract with the successful bidder shortly after, with completion expected early in the new year. I would like to reassure Cllr Hall that this process is fully in

	line with Council and Government legislation around seeking the best value for this site The sale is unconditional, and the onus will be on the successful bidder to apply for planning permission for redevelopment of this site, which is categorised in our Local Plan as a housing site. Through the planning process the Council will ensure that the redevelopment of the site is appropriate for the needs of residents and the conservation area. Regarding RM Grylls, this site is not being marketed nor considered for sale at this time. Following discussions with the Housing Growth team within the Development Service, I have agreed that options for the potential re-development of this site for affordable housing should be explored and therefore this site has been temporarily withdrawn from the surplus asset disposal process pending this consideration. A report from Housing Growth on their progress with the RM Grylls site is expected in Spring 2026. Any further decisions required will be discussed at that time.
20	Question from Councillor Hall to the Leader of the Council – Councillor Pattison “Can we please have an update on the development of the Council's Culture Strategy?” <u>Leader response</u> The Council’s Culture and Tourism team is working with leaders from a wide range of cultural organisations to produce the Cultural Strategy. At first, they were working with a local consultancy which researched key priorities to be covered by the strategy. This work included engaging with those working or volunteering within the sector to discover what their needs are. Through this process, the steering group has been galvanised to collaborate and is presently finalising the draft strategy for consultation. They are keen to work together to engage local communities and are planning the engagement programme to take place after Christmas. In addition, one of the partners on the steering group, the University of Huddersfield, has secured funding for an active research programme which will look at how we successfully develop local cultural delivery plans encompassing Culture, Heritage and Tourism. These plans will be produced with communities and include their priorities for their area plus look at how these can be delivered. I appreciate that the production of the strategy is taking longer than first envisaged but it is proving to be a beneficial process which has formed a strong partnership between the Cultural Sector, council and university for the first time in many years.
21	Question from Councillor Sheard to the Leader of the Council – Councillor Pattison (Referred to Councillor Turner) “The Nab Lane household waste site in Birstall was closed on 10 November 2024. This closure has caused considerable frustration for residents who have

	lost local access to a key waste and recycling facility, and this cabinet doesn't seem interested in the needs of Birstall and the surrounding towns. Can the Leader outline what the Council's plans are for the Nab Lane site, and whether there is any intention to reopen or repurpose the site in the near future?" <u>Cabinet Member response</u> Our current focus is on how we can best utilise the Nab Lane site to support the wider waste strategy, and the proposed changes to waste services under the Governments new Simpler Recycling initiative. This national programme aims to standardise recycling collections and make it easier for households to participate effectively. To prepare for this, our waste and planning teams have been working collaboratively to assess the necessary modifications at Nab Lane so that the facility can play a more strategic role within our district-wide waste management strategy. By doing so, we aim to increase recycling rates, reduce environmental impact, and make services more accessible for residents, while aligning with both national and local sustainability goals. It is important to clarify that there are no plans to reopen Nab Lane as a traditional household waste recycling site. We recognise the importance of transparent communication and public engagement during this transition. Officers will continue to attend Cabinet and Scrutiny meetings regularly to provide updates and respond to queries.
22	Question from Councillor Sheard to the Leader of the Council – Councillor Pattison (Referred to Councillor A U Pinnock) "Reports from international and national media have exposed the horrific persecution and genocide of Christians in Nigeria, where whole communities have been attacked and families burnt alive for following their faith. Given Kirklees Council's record of taking stands on global humanitarian issues, will the Council issue a statement condemning the persecution of Christians in Nigeria and across the wider region, and write to the UK Government urging the Prime Minister to strengthen diplomatic and humanitarian efforts to protect Christians subjected to such horrific crimes?" <u>Cabinet Member response</u> Kirklees Council notes with deep concern the reports from international and national media regarding the persecution of Christian communities in Nigeria and parts of the wider region. As a local authority, we are committed to fostering inclusive communities and promoting respect for all faiths and beliefs. We recognise the importance of standing against all forms of persecution and discrimination, wherever they occur.

	While matters of foreign policy and international humanitarian intervention lie within the remit of national government, Kirklees Council continues to monitor global humanitarian issues and remains committed to upholding the values of compassion, dignity, and justice
23	Question from Councillor Brook to the Cabinet Member for Housing and Transport – Councillor Crook “The new Communication Strategy, introduced in August 2025 following a project rollout beginning on 1 July 2024, was intended to improve engagement with residents and businesses during major works and local initiatives. However, there have been repeated failures to meet its stated objectives. Businesses and residents have reported being unaware of project phases and unable to plan for business interruptions. Most recently, inadequate notice to affected businesses resulted in significant disruption, including a protest and the barricading of a lay-by with hay bales. Can the Council please explain how it intends to ensure that this Communication Strategy will be effectively implemented going forward, to guarantee timely, clear, and transparent communication with Councillors residents and businesses alike?” <u>Cabinet Member response</u> Thank you for raising this. The Council fully recognises that effective communication is essential to the success of any major works — not only to keep residents and businesses informed, but to maintain trust and minimise disruption. The new Communication & Engagement framework introduced across Major Projects in August 2025 was developed in response to feedback from the local community and was agreed by the ward Cllrs in Holme Valley South ahead of implementation. It is designed so that information is shared as early and accurately as possible based on what is known at the time, accepting that regular schedule adaptation and adjustment is a feature of large civil engineering projects. This framework includes regular engagement directly with affected communities and businesses to allow any concerns to be raised and addressed quickly. The framework also identifies that a minimum of 10 working days’ notice for any major change to access, deliveries, or parking, should be provided and we acknowledge that, in some recent instances, these standards were not met. We deeply regret the disruption caused. We remain committed to undertaking engagement consistently and transparently on all schemes, and to ensuring that councillors, residents, and businesses receive timely, clear, and accurate information about all major works near to where they live or work.
24	Question from Councillor Brook to the Cabinet Member for Housing and Transport – Councillor Crook “Whilst I welcome the imminent completion of the northern aspect of the Holmfirth project, I must highlight the ongoing and severe impact on the businesses located near the car park area, who have been among the most and

	longest affected and who will suffer long after the publicised completion date. Several of these businesses are now in serious financial difficulty, whilst also facing amenity issues including persistent foul odours, dirt and dust entering their premises, constant daytime noise pollution, and the general unsightly condition of the area surrounding their businesses. What measures has Kirklees Council put in place to support these affected businesses, both financially and practically, in recognition of the sustained disruption they have endured?" <u>Cabinet Member response</u> I want to begin by acknowledging the disruption both residents and businesses have endured over a sustained period. The impact on our business community's operations and wellbeing in particular is extremely regrettable, and I want to assure the local community and businesses that Kirklees Council remains committed to completing this scheme as swiftly and sensitively as possible, so that the wider community can begin to enjoy the long-term benefits of the improvements this major investment in the town will deliver. Adopting a sectional-completion approach will enable the community to have much of the town centre back as soon as possible - and within the original projected project timeframe - so I am very pleased that we have finally been able to make this programme adjustment following prolonged efforts to make this happen. In recognition of the specific issues raised, our Contractor partners have already taken steps to mitigate immediate disruption including installing sandbags where the wall adjacent to nearby businesses has been temporarily removed, to help prevent the spread of dust and debris. Daily washdowns of the walkways adjacent to the site are undertaken to maintain cleanliness and reduce nuisance and a window cleaner to regularly clean the affected business frontage has also been provided. Kirklees council have put further and additional support measures in place and remain absolutely committed to supporting the fantastic array of independent business in Holmfirth.
25	Question from Councillor Brook to the Cabinet Member for Communities and Environment – Councillor A U Pinnock "Holmfirth has experienced a growing rat problem in recent years, particularly around the poorly named "duck feeding area" near the Crown Bottom Car Park, where rats can now be seen in broad daylight. This problem has been compounded by individuals continuing to feed both ducks and rats, and by some individuals dumping foodstuffs—including eggs, pasta, and other household waste—directly into the river at this location. A Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) is already in place in Holmfirth, and feeding of wildlife is explicitly not permitted under its terms. Can the Council please outline what enforcement action is being, or will be, taken to prevent this situation from continuing/worsening and to ensure that the existing PSPO is properly upheld and respected?"

	<u>Cabinet Member response</u> I was not previously aware of this issue, and I fully understand the concerns raised. Our PSPO Officers have already visited the site on three occasions over the past week. During these visits, they spoke to an individual feeding ducks and explained the PSPO restrictions. However, the individual pointed out an old sign at the location which encourages duck feeding and states that the Council has funded and supported the Duck Feeding Area. This has created a conflict that prevents enforcement under current circumstances. While we believe the land is Kirklees, the sign was installed in 2019 by River Holme Connections, supported by several partners. To resolve this, we will seek agreement to remove the existing sign and replace it with clear PSPO signage. Additional PSPO signs will need to be ordered, so this may take a little time. In the meantime, officers will continue to monitor the area and engage with the public to discourage feeding.
26	Question from Councillor Thompson to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Waste – Councillor Hawkins “Has there been a survey or review as to the ongoing additional waiting times at Dewsbury tip, and of the added costs to the council and residents?” <u>Cabinet Member response</u> Thank you for your question. The operator of the site at Weaving Lane has not raised any concerns about current queueing levels, and we have not received any recent complaints from members of the public regarding waiting times. As with any facility, there are inevitably peak periods when the site is busier, so we encourage residents to plan their visits accordingly to minimize waiting. We are also due to open a new site shortly, which has been built as part of the TransPennine Rail Upgrade project. We will closely monitor usage and any queueing during the initial period to ensure this site is running efficiently for residents. There are no costs to the Council associated with queueing times, and we are not aware of any additional costs that residents might incur as a result of waiting at the site, but we continue to work to maximize site efficiency to make visiting any of our HWRCs as efficient and convenient as possible for residents.
27	Question from Councillor Thompson to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Waste – Councillor Hawkins “When Nab Lane tip was proposed to be closed, was there any consultation with Leeds Council?” <u>Cabinet Member response</u> Informal discussions did take place with Leeds Council. Their nearest sites are in Pudsey and Middleton and they confirmed there was no interest in a cross-border arrangement as they faced their own service and financial challenges.
28	Question from Councillor Thompson to the Cabinet Member for Highways

	and Waste – Councillor Hawkins “What progress has been made with the borough clean-up which was included in the Conservative budget amendment?” <u>Cabinet Member response</u> The budget clean-up programme is being delivered through a combination of our Cleansing Service, Highways Services, and external contractors. All parties have commenced work, and photographic evidence of completed tasks has been requested. Regular updates will be provided as the programme progresses. Our highways maintenance teams are currently carrying out essential footway improvements at Wakefield Road, Scissett, and Woodville Road, Dewsbury, where short stretches of dilapidated footway are being repaired. Next stages include Lea Lane, Netherton (week commencing 8th December) and Station Road, Slaithwaite (week commencing 15th December). These interventions aim to improve safety and accessibility in village and town centre approaches and outside schools. Our street lighting team has also started its programme of replacing and repairing illuminated signs and grubbing out islands. Enhancement works to the Birkby Bradley Greenway are progressing, focusing on surface upgrades, gateway improvements, and installation of additional benches (procurement pending). A significant cut back has already been completed, and a large amount of bulky household fly-tipping has been removed, improving the overall condition of the route. Our contractor will undertake vegetation clearance across multiple sites, including flailing and cutting back at Heckmondwike Road (Dewsbury Moor), Spen Bank (Cleckheaton), Hollinbank Lane (Heckmondwike), and Liley Lane (Grange Moor), as well as grubbing out along Freakfield Lane (Hartshead Liversedge) and Liley Lane (Upper Hopton). Additional cutting back and grubbing out will take place at Webster Hill (Dewsbury), where winter die-back will also allow accumulated litter to be removed. Further attention will be given to Knotty Lane (Lepton), Cumberworth Lane (Upper Cumberworth), and Barnsley Road (Flockton) to address overgrowth and maintain safe access. Flailing of Kilner Bank has already been completed.
29	Question from Councillor Holt to the Cabinet Member for Communities and Environment – Councillor A U Pinnock “Who is responsible for cutting the grass at North Kirklees bowling greens?” <u>Cabinet Member response</u> Responsibility for cutting the grass at North Kirklees bowling greens, which are under Council ownership, lies with the Parks and Greenspace team. A subcontractor carries out regular maintenance and specialised renovation works to ensure these greens remain in suitable condition for use by the local community and affiliated bowling clubs.

	If there are concerns regarding the frequency or standard of grass cutting on these Council-owned sites, please direct them to the Parks and Greenspaces section for further attention.
30	Question from Councillor Holt to the Cabinet Member for Housing and Transport – Councillor Crook “Council House residents are to be charged for grass cutting. Will this service be monitored and quality controlled, and will grass cuttings be removed?” <u>Cabinet Member response</u> The Grounds Maintenance Service Charge does not cover the cost of removing cut grass which will be mulched on site in line with environmental best practice. It does however cover the following services; • Grass cutting: grass will be cut every 2-3 weeks during the growing season, up to 12 times a year. • Shrubs: Shrubs will get a trim once a year, usually during the winter months. The council will do a more thorough cutback every three years to keep them healthy. • Hedge maintenance: Hedges will be cut once a year. The council will do this between October and February to protect nesting birds. • Weed control: The council will treat weeds around grass edges and along walls and fences once a year, usually at the start of the growing season. • Herbaceous beds (non-woody plants that die down to the root each year): These will get a yearly tidy-up, including weed removal and trimming back of plants. • Trees and woodlands: the council shall take care of trees according to national standards and our policies. • Homes & Neighbourhoods, and the Highways & Streetscene service currently undertake individual quality checks in response to residents reporting issues. The services are working collaboratively to implement a programme of pro-active quality checks for grounds maintenance to ensure the above services are being delivered in a consistent way.
31	Question from Councillor Holt to the Cabinet Member for Housing and Transport – Councillor Crook “When will the vacant posts of estate housing officers in my ward be filled?” <u>Cabinet Member response</u> The really positive news is that there has now been approval to backfill (4) Housing Management Officer vacancies. The posts will be advertised through the formal Council recruitment process as soon as possible. When appointments are made, members will be provided with the updated contact details for the officers aligned to their ward area. In the meantime, housing management officers will be deployed from other areas to ensure priority areas of work continue to be delivered.
32	Question from Councillor McGrath to the Cabinet Member for Finance and Regeneration – Councillor Turner

	“On the proposed flexible 2,000 capacity venue in the final phase of the Huddersfield Blueprint on the site of the old multi storey car park, could you tell me who has been consulted among existing venues such as the Lawrence Batley Theatre, The Parish and Smile Bar, and whether a larger 5,000 plus option has been considered so it works as a mid size arena that complements rather than competes with established local businesses?” <u>Cabinet Member response</u> Thank you for your question regarding the proposed flexible 2,000-capacity venue as part of the Our Cultural Heart project. As part of the masterplan and Outline Business Case (OBC) development, there was extensive stakeholder and public consultation, including engagement with music and cultural sector representatives. While venues such as the Lawrence Batley Theatre and The Parish were included, it’s worth noting that the Smile Bar was not open at the time of consultation. Further consultation with Lawerance Batley Theatre, Huddersfield Town Hall and University of Huddersfield was referenced in the Kirklees OCH Venue Feasibility Stage 1 report, an appendix to the OCH Cabinet Report from September early this year. We continue to welcome dialogue with local venues and stakeholders as the project progresses. Regarding the suggestion of a larger venue — such as a 5,000+ capacity option — this was considered during feasibility work. Section 7.4 of the Stage 1 report concludes that the site footprint is not sufficient to accommodate a venue of that scale, particularly when factoring in building height, surrounding infrastructure, and operational requirements. The proposed venue is intended to complement rather than compete with existing venues, filling a gap in the local and regional offer. We’ve engaged specialist advisors to ensure the proposal is commercially viable and aligned with market expectations. We remain committed to working collaboratively with local businesses and cultural organisations to ensure the venue enhances Huddersfield’s offer and supports the wider ambitions of the Blueprint. I have a meeting on the 20th of November with the chief exec and the chair of the LBT trustees as part on the ongoing dialogue with the LBT
33	Question from Councillor McGrath to the Cabinet Member for Finance and Regeneration – Councillor Turner “Could you confirm what the capacity is of all town centre car parks and do you have stats showing the busiest times for all the car parks and how often these car parks are extremely full?” <u>Cabinet Member response</u> Thank you for your question. Details regarding the location, capacity, and any parking limitations for all council-operated car parks can be found on the council’s parking website:

	Find parking spaces in Kirklees If the Councillor could clarify which specific car parks are referred to as 'Town Centre Car Parks', we would be happy to provide any statistics we hold. We regularly receive data from our partner, RingGo, for example, and undertake capacity reviews when required.
34	Question from Councillor McGrath to the Cabinet Member for Housing and Transport – Councillor Crook “Could you give us a timescale for when we are likely to be delivering 2 trains per hour running in the same direction as part of the Penistone line upgrade?” <u>Cabinet Member response</u> It's great that Cllr McGrath is showing interest in improvements to services along the Penistone Railway Line. Two trains per hour is not only a long standing Kirklees ambition but is supported by Transport for the North, regional partners in Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council, Sheffield City Council, West Yorkshire Combined Authority, South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority and within the industry including Network Rail, Northern Trains. Kirklees Council has been awarded £48M to deliver line-speed improvements, double tracking loops and station improvements which will act as a stepping stone project towards the end goal of two trains per hour. We are currently working with our delivery partner to complete an Outline Business Case (OBC) by end March 2026 for this scheme. Assuming the Dept for Transport approve the OBC we will continue to Full Business Case (FBC) in 2026 and then into the delivery phase which is likely to take us to at least 2029. As funding has not yet been secured for delivery of two trains per hour it is not possible to give a clear answer, but hopefully this shows the ongoing commitment of Kirklees Council and its partners to achieving this strategic goal.
35	Question from Councillor Safdar to the Cabinet Member for Communities and Environment – Councillor A U Pinnock “A few nights ago, a number of concerned locals and I witnessed some awful firework related criminal behaviour in various parts of my ward. Some of these crimes may not have been recorded however pending the publication of this year's data, the most recent verified figures from 2024 highlight continuing concern about the misuse of fireworks across the Kirklees district. During the 2024 Bonfire period 1st to the 6th November, West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service attended around 100 fire related incidents in Kirklees. The second highest total in West Yorkshire. West Yorkshire Police recorded over 150 reports of firework-related anti social behaviour, made 11 arrests, and local services treated nine individuals, mostly under 21 years of age, for burns and eye injuries. The Kirklees Community Safety Partnership reported a 7% increase in anti social behaviour compared with 2023, with firework misuse identified as a persistent seasonal hotspot. In light of these figures, and the increasing number of representations received from parents, pensioners, pet owners, and carers of individuals with additional

needs across Huddersfield and the wider district, will the Cabinet Member write to the Home Office to lobby for an increase in the minimum legal age for the sale of fireworks, in recognition of the growing community concern and the need to protect the safety and wellbeing of residents and animals across Kirklees?"

Cabinet Member response

Thank you for raising concerns regarding the use of fireworks and their impact on our communities. We are aware of the distress that can be caused to residents, including parents, pensioners, pet owners, and carers of individuals with additional needs. We also appreciate the representations made by members of the public and elected representatives across the district.

The data from 2024, including reports from West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service, West Yorkshire Police, and the Kirklees Community Safety Partnership, clearly highlight the impact of firework misuse on community safety, particularly among young people and vulnerable groups. Bonfire night and fireworks are a seasonal ASB concern and extensive preventative plans with partners are in Place annually led by the Fire Service.

Kirklees Council is aware of the distressing incidents that can occur, as seen on bonfire night in Bradford and Scarborough last week, which have understandably heightened public concern around firework-related safety. These events serve as a stark reminder of the risks associated with irresponsible use and the importance of community awareness.

Locally, the Kirklees Community Safety Partnership continues to work closely with West Yorkshire Police, Fire & Rescue, and other agencies to monitor and respond to issues affecting public safety, including those linked to seasonal celebrations. We remain committed to supporting efforts that promote safe, respectful, and inclusive environments for all residents.

Kirklees Community Safety Partnership actions that have and are taking place well in advance of Bonfire night;

- Community Tensions & Misinformation: Monitoring and countering false narratives about what is happening in communities linked to bonfire night and fireworks
 - Prevention Measures: targeted School engagement, place of worship visits, and partnership letters take place
 - Environmental Visual Audits : Scheduled checks for illegal bonfire structures.
 - Increased police presence and patrols , ensuring a Police confidence in the areas
- deemed more problematic for firework related crime and ASB.
- Waste Removal & Mobilisation of On-Call Crews: Coordinated with WYFRS and council teams.
 - Multi-agency Days of Action: Targeting hotspots for ASB and fire risk have taken place
 - Kirklees Community Environmental Support Officers (CESOs) spend extensive time covering their specific areas, always carrying out EVAs whilst out, however they will pay particular attention to high-risk areas leading up to the bonfire weekend.
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While regulation and enforcement of fireworks fall under national legislation and policing powers, we will continue to listen to community feedback and share concerns with relevant partners.

	We thank our emergency services and community teams for their responses to firework related incidents and ongoing dedication. We also want to thank residents for their continued engagement and encourage the reporting of incidents to help inform future safety planning and enforcement efforts.
36	Question from Councillor R Smith to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Communities – Councillor A U Pinnock “Can the Cabinet Member confirm that the recently adopted policy of fencing on Christmas trees is to be scrapped?” <u>Cabinet Member response</u> Thank you for your question. The policy regarding fencing around Christmas trees has been in place since 2020 and, at present, there are no plans to scrap this approach. However, we have given a commitment to review and refresh the policy in line with current legislation and best practice guidance. As part of the review, our teams will begin a phased risk assessment of each site to determine whether the barriers are still necessary. However, due to available resource and competing priorities the review will commence in 2026 ahead of the festive season onwards.
37	Question from Councillor Firth to the Leader of the Council – Councillor Pattison “I was really pleased to hear the announcement you made about the provision of a new sports facility for Dewsbury, can you outline the next steps and will this include a swimming pool?” <u>Leader response</u> After Cabinet approval on 21 October 2025 for the Brightsparks report recommendations to boost physical activity in North Kirklees, officers are preparing to undertake an external options appraisal, which will identify what sort of facilities residents would want to see in a new leisure facility; followed by feasibility study to determine cost and location. During the consultation, people consistently expressed a desire for a dedicated leisure centre where they can swim, be active, and come together. Swimming was highlighted as a particularly valued activity, offering both physical and social benefits, with such a centre viewed not just as a place for exercise but as a welcoming hub that strengthens community ties and supports health and wellbeing across all ages. Integrating activity spaces within co-located facilities, alongside shops, cafés, childcare, health provision, libraries, or job centres would further embed participation into daily life, making it more convenient and inclusive. Given the clear views on access to swimming, the new centre will have a swimming pool The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee will be discussing physical activity in Dewsbury on 14 November.
38	Question from Councillor Davies to the Cabinet Member for Finance and

	Regeneration – Councillor Turner “Please can you confirm the latest plans and the current timelines for the opening of the New Museum being built in our Cultural Heart?” <u>Cabinet Member response</u> It is expected that the new Museum and Gallery in Our Cultural Heart will open in Spring 2029. Cabinet approved progressing this project to construction on 9th September 2025. Although some works have already started within the building to prepare it for renovation, the main works to the old library to create the new Museum and Gallery are on course to start in late April 2026. Designs for the new Museum and Gallery are presently being refined. This will be a modern facility better able to house and care for our special collections including one of the North’s best art collections. The building will include various exhibition galleries telling the story of Kirklees, the place, its people and its industry. There will also be galleries in which to host temporary exhibitions including touring exhibitions which we have previously struggled to welcome into Kirklees and so our residents will no longer have to travel to other places in the country to see them. The new venue will have improved visitor facilities such as a shop, cafe and learning spaces so we can accommodate school visits and ensure our young people can enjoy learning about history and our towns and villages. The Museum and Gallery will not just feature exhibitions. It will be a place which can host networking events, lectures, small performances, workshops and community events and provide opportunities for local businesses to showcase their new products. It will be a place in which we can learn from the past, celebrate our present achievements and take inspiration to inform our futures.
39	Question from Councillor Bolt to the Leader of the Council – Councillor Pattison (Referred to Councillor Turner) “Please can the Leader explain, for the public, what capital borrowing is, and give examples of its use in Kirklees?” <u>Cabinet Member response</u> Capital Expenditure is expenditure on the acquisition of a fixed asset or expenditure which adds to and not merely maintains the value of an existing fixed asset. This covers numerous things including (but not limited to): land and buildings, vehicles, equipment and road networks. Prudential (sometimes referred to as Capital) borrowing is a means of funding capital expenditure, whereby funds are raised as loans from a third party, normally the Public Works Loans Board (PWLb). The Council does not tend to borrow for individual line items in the Capital plan but manages its borrowing requirements over the year. We borrow at various times, and for varying lengths to spread the risk of interest rate volatility. This is all undertaken within approved Treasury Management strategy.

	Capital expenditure can also be funded by the receipts of capital grants/contributions, reserves or capital receipts.
40	Question from Councillor Bolt to the Leader of the Council – Councillor Pattison “The planning process in Kirklees seems at the moment to have lost the confidence of many in our communities, with the recent judicial review finding against the Council, the disclosures through FOI on other cases and the public outrage, as we have seen, with regards to a controversial (and allegedly damaging to the health of residents) development. What is the Leader doing to restore the faith of our communities in the planning process?” <u>Cabinet Member response</u> The Council has one of the busiest Planning Services in the Country, it receives several thousand planning applications each year which it determines in accordance with national and local planning policy. The Service maintains high standards of high performance which can be seen in the Governments published figures. The recent JR decision at Chidswell only found fault with a technical reason about publishing draft S106 agreements online before a decision notice is issued, all substantive planning matters within the JR challenge were not upheld by the Judge. This is the only JR decision on a planning application I can recall being successful in recent times. I am not aware of what disclosures through FOIs or other cases you are referring to me but if you want to provide me with information i can follow this up. The officers in the planning department are highly professional and aim to give the best possible service to applicants. They all deal with more cases than we would like but we ae not immune from the national shortage of planning officers and we do all we can to support them in dealing with high caseloads. We out preform the targets set for the planning department by the government, which is a testament to their hard work and commitment. We are always looking at ways to improve the service and only last week I had a meeting with the new service director to look at ways how we can make improvements. There is also on-going dialogue with a developer group to take on board how they can help us improve the service The Planning Service provides fair, impartial and professional planning advice to its customers and residents. Whilst the Service would benefit for increased levels of staffing to support its functions and speed up its through put of decisions, I am confident that our Planning Service does provide a good service to achieve the objectives of the Local Plan and the Councils ambitions for housing and job growth.
41	Question from Councillor Bolt to the Leader of the Council – Councillor Pattison (Referred to Councillor A U Pinnock)

“An MP has started a campaign to reduce the noise levels of fireworks, in Mirfield and other areas our residents rightly complain about fireworks being let off throughout the year and for prolonged periods late in the evening. What measures can the Leader bring in to protect our communities from such nuisances?”

Cabinet Member response

Kirklees Council recognises the serious concerns raised regarding firework-related incidents during the recent Bonfire period. It is significant priority for West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service, West Yorkshire Police, and the Kirklees Community Safety Partnership to work to reduce these incidents. Therefore, the partnership coordinates an annual preventative response in relation to the impact of firework misuse on local community safety, particularly focusing on young people and vulnerable groups.

We are aware of the distress caused to residents, including parents, pensioners, pet owners, and carers of individuals with additional needs, and we appreciate the representations made by members of the public and elected representatives across the district.

While the regulation of fireworks, including age restrictions, is a matter for national government, we remain committed to ensuring that community concerns are heard and considered as part of ongoing dialogue with relevant agencies.

The Kirklees Community Safety Partnership response is led by West Yorkshire Fire & Rescue, supported by the Police, Council Services and other agencies to monitor and respond to issues affecting public safety, including those linked to seasonal celebrations. We remain committed to supporting efforts that promote safe, respectful, and inclusive environments for all residents.

Kirklees Community Safety Partnership actions that have taken place in the months up to Bonfire Night and continue are.

- Community Tensions & Misinformation: Monitoring and countering false narratives about what is happening in communities linked to bonfire night and fireworks
- Prevention Measures: targeted School engagement, place of worship visits, and partnership letters take place
- Environmental Visual Audits (EVA): Scheduled checks for illegal bonfire structures.
- Increased police presence and patrols, ensuring a Police confidence in the areas deemed more problematic for firework related crime and ASB.
- Waste Removal & Mobilisation of On-Call Crews: Coordinated with WYFRS and council teams.
- Multi-agency Days of Action: Targeting hotspots for ASB and fire risk have taken place
- Kirklees Community Environmental Support Officers (CESOs) spend extensive time covering their specific areas, always carrying out EVAs whilst out, however they will pay particular attention to high-risk areas leading up to the bonfire weekend.
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	While regulation and enforcement of fireworks fall under national legislation and policing powers, we will continue to listen to community feedback and share concerns with relevant partners. We thank our emergency services and community teams for their partnership planning and responses. We also want to thank residents for their continued engagement and encourage the reporting of incidents to help inform future safety planning and enforcement efforts.
42	Question from Councillor Sheard to the Leader of the Council – Councillor Pattison (Referred to Councillor Turner) “Over recent months, serious concerns have been raised locally about housing developments taking place on land with a history of industrial use, where geoenvironmental and public health assessments have identified potential contamination risks — including asbestos and other hazardous materials — with implications for nearby residents and construction workers. These concerns highlight the critical importance of the Council’s environmental health responsibilities under Policy LP53 of the Kirklees Local Plan, Part 2A of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, and the DEFRA Contaminated Land Statutory Guidance (2012), which collectively require that land be suitable for its intended use and that any risks to human health or the environment are robustly assessed, remediated, and transparently verified. Can the Cabinet outline how the Council ensures full compliance with these statutory duties — including independent verification of remediation works, clear lines of accountability between planning and environmental health functions, and ongoing monitoring where contamination risks are identified — and whether development activity will be suspended where there is uncertainty about the adequacy of investigation or remediation to protect public health?” <u>Cabinet Member response</u> Land contamination and the redevelopment of land with a history of industrial use are complex and highly regulated areas. Developers are required to undertake proportionate site investigations, risk assessments, remediation strategies and verification reports in line with the National Planning Policy Framework, the DEFRA Statutory Guidance (2012) to Part 2A of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, and Policy LP53 of the Kirklees Local Plan. Council officers assess these technical submissions rigorously, and where necessary, planning conditions are imposed by either officers or committee members to ensure that land is demonstrably suitable for its intended use and does not present an unacceptable risk to human health or the environment. Remediation works must be verified by suitably qualified professionals, and verification reports are reviewed by the Council’s contaminated land officers before planning conditions are discharged. Where there is any uncertainty about the adequacy of investigation or remediation, the Council will not discharge the relevant conditions or permit further development until it is satisfied that risks have been properly addressed. In addition, where information indicates a breach of planning control or statutory requirements – for example, if remediation works differ materially from agreed strategies or appear inadequate – both officers in planning and environmental

	health teams have delegated authority to take proportionate enforcement or regulatory action depending on the area of any potential breach. This may include requiring further investigation, halting works, or referring matters to other regulators where appropriate. The Council therefore has clear professional oversight, lines of accountability between planning and environmental health, and established procedures to ensure that land is made suitable for use and that public health remains protected throughout and beyond the development process.
43	Question from Councillor Masood Ahmed to the Cabinet Member for Finance and Regeneration – Councillor Turner “At a recent Cabinet meeting, when questioned about spending on the George Hotel, you responded that the full £30 million had not yet been spent as the project is still awaiting planning approval. Can you therefore confirm how much has actually been spent to date on the George Hotel project, including all costs such as consultancy fees, design and architectural work, professional services, surveys, legal or staffing costs, or any other associated expenditure?” <u>Cabinet Member response</u> It is a really exciting time for the George Hotel, following the granting of planning permission, allowing us to proceed to the next stage. This next stage involves negotiation to finalise the costs and contract arrangements with the contractors for the next development phases. Therefore, costs and remaining budget information is commercially sensitive during this key stage. Cllrs will ensure full transparency on the costs for the George Hotel once this commercially sensitive contractual negotiation is completed.
44	Question from Councillor McKerchar to the Cabinet Member for Education – Councillor Rylah “In Kirklees what is the most recent 12 month total for children's suspensions from education? How does this relate to the overall trend in Kirklees, and compare with similar LAs?” <u>Cabinet Member response</u> The most recent nationally published data set for the full 12-month period was for the academic year 2023 – 2024. The next full update is due in Nov 2025. • According to the DfE’s published data, Kirklees’ suspension rate remains above the national average and is broadly in line with the Yorkshire & Humber regional trend. • Suspension rate: 12.83 per 100 pupils (up from 10.98 in 2022/23). • Total suspensions: 8576

	• Permanent exclusions Rate: 0.13 remained the same as 2022 / 2023 (85 exclusions) • Most common reason: The main reason for suspensions in Kirklees, as nationally, is persistent disruptive behaviour. I'm sure you will all agree it is our collective responsibility to ensure that children and young people have their aspirations, rights and talents, nurtured acknowledged and celebrated and they deserve nothing but the best. This is central to our learning strategy "Our Kirklees Futures" which focuses on several areas including school attendance, inclusion and reducing suspensions and exclusions. We continue to work with all our partners to achieve those ambitions. However, post COVID we have seen a national and regional increase in suspensions and exclusions and the picture in Kirklees mirrors these trends. We are working with our schools and wider partnership to close the gap between Kirklees and the national and regional averages and the data for 2025/26 shows a downward trend in suspension and exclusion rates which is positive. We also know there are groups of children who are disproportionately affected, including children with additional needs and those children accessing free school meals. We provide support to schools through our Inclusion Multi Agency Panel (IMAP) which is a multi-agency forum. This provides the opportunity to consider alternative educational options or interventions to prevent permanent exclusions or our children and young people. More than 600 children have accessed support or alternative provision short term placements in the last 12 months through these arrangements. Also, we provide support to schools through our cluster model ensuring that expertise, advice and intervention are available to support the inclusion of our children and young people with additional needs.
45	Question from Councillor McKerchar to the Cabinet Member for Communities and Environment – Councillor A U Pinnock "What are the most recent figures on Violence Against Women and Girls in Kirklees, and how do they compare with similar LAs?" <u>Cabinet Member response</u> Violence Against Women and Girls remains a significant concern both nationally and locally VAWG offences include complex crimes and are made up of various offences. The data from the Community Safety Partnership was shared at Kirklees Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee in May 2025 and is as follows: <i>The Community Safety Partnership indicator for the number of sexual and rape incidents with a female victim across the district has increased by 91 reported offences in the last 12 month (2023 - 1046 incidents, 2024 1137 incidents)</i> Partners felt strongly VAWG and sexual violence is an area of under reporting and warranted a strong Partnership focus across the whole partnership. The VAWG Partnership will report into Communities Board every quarter. Work on Data and Intelligence across the CSP is continuous but being able to draw comparisons to other Local Authority areas for VAWG is being explored and we continue to work closely with other Local Authorities across West Yorkshire.

	Kirklees Community Safety Partnership (CSP) is taking a multi-agency, trauma-informed approach to tackling VAWG. This includes: • Prioritising VAWG in the Kirklees Communities Partnership Plan • Working with the West Yorkshire Violence Reduction Partnership under the Serious Violence Duty. • Collaborating with schools and safeguarding partners to address abuse in education settings. • Supporting police-led initiatives such as Ask for Angela and targeted enforcement operations • Supporting Safe Zones, the Night Safety Bus and Street Marshalls • Supporting Reclaim the Night • Supporting the White Ribbon campaign to challenge misogyny and promote gender equality. • Supporting the investment of external grant funding to go into local projects and initiatives that support the VAWG Agenda such as a key partner RASAC (rape and sexual abuse centre) • We begin this year's White Ribbon Campaign here in Kirklees on 25th November followed by 16 days of positive action to highlight the impact of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) calling for sustained change. In Kirklees, partners will be facilitating a range of events, training and information sessions that can be accessed by professionals to build their skills, knowledge and increase access to resources. • The theme for White Ribbon this year is: 'We speak up': Letting sexism slide puts women and girls at risk. Sexist jokes, catcalling, staring, and comments might seem harmless, but they are serious because they can lead to violence and abuse. This White Ribbon Day, we want more men to use their voices and speak up to create a world where everyone is safe, equal, and respected. Every time we ignore something that doesn't feel right, we miss a chance to set a better example.' Ending VAWG is not solely the responsibility of women—it requires active allyship from everyone. Allies play a vital role by: • Listening to and believing survivors, creating safe spaces for disclosure. • Challenging harmful behaviours and attitudes, including misogyny and victim-blaming. • Educating themselves and others about the realities of abuse and the importance of consent. • Advocating for change, supporting policies and services that protect and empower women. This campaign is a reminder that ending violence against women and girls is everyone's responsibility, and that positive change begins with everyday actions and conversations. We remain committed to reducing harm, improving support for victims, and fostering safer communities for women and girls across Kirklees.
46	Question from Councillor J C Lawson to the Cabinet Member for Finance and Regeneration – Councillor Turner "How many contaminated sites are included in the Council's brownfield site register and are already allocated for housing?"

	<u>Cabinet Member response</u> 67 sites are on the Brownfield Land Register but only 34 of these are Local Plan Allocations. It should be remembered that the land is potentially contaminated, but this is not confirmed. Confirmation would come through investigations which take place during the Planning Application process or afterwards if unexpected contamination is found on site. Planning Conditions are used to cover contamination matters.
47	Question from Councillor A C Pinnock to the Cabinet Member for Finance and Regeneration – Councillor Turner “The Library in Cleckheaton is a grade 2 listed building and in need of urgent maintenance to prevent further deterioration. What funding is allocated in the Council's budget for this essential work?” <u>Cabinet Member response</u> The Council's Corporate Landlord team works closely with the Library Service to identify which Libraries should be prioritised for investment each year. The Library in Cleckheaton has received regular investment in recent years to address essential maintenance. In the past six years, £355K has been spent on replacements boilers, roofs and windows. In addition, a further £150K has been allocated for works in Financial Year 2026/27 to replace the library's dome and surrounding flat roof. It should be noted that an average of £14K per annum is also spent on planned maintenance and reactive repairs at this site. If Ward Councillors have any specific concerns regarding items of maintenance that are required at this location, then please let Officers in the Council's Property service know and they will investigate the situation.

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