COUNCIL MEETING

Wednesday 21 January 2026

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

1	**Question from Councillor Bolt to the Leader of the Council – Councillor Pattison (Referred to Councillor Addy)** "The second Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy, which ended in March 2025, included an objective that 50% of short journeys in towns and cities should be walked or cycled by 2030. Please can the Leader provide data for Active Travel journeys in Kirklees and in particular where the journeys are mentioned?" Cabinet Member Response Thank you for your question regarding the second Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy objective that 50% of short journeys in towns and cities should be walked or cycled by 2030. This was a national strategy with progress tracked at a national level and was published by the previous government, not by Kirklees Council. National walking and cycling datasets can therefore be found on the Department for Transport's website particularly the National Travel Survey webpages, as well as Sport England's Active Lives Survey published on their website. The current government is currently developing the third Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy.
2	**Question from Councillor Armer to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Waste – Councillor Hawkins** "I was contacted by a Thurstonland resident on 8th January who informed that Cold Hill/Halstead Lane had not been gritted, and the road was in a dangerous condition. On making enquiries I was informed that the local contractor had declined to grit the route because overhanging tree limbs were causing damage to his vehicle. I have since been told that these trees are rooted in private property adjacent to the highway. What powers does this council have to require that vegetation on private land does not cause obstruction to free passage on the highway?" Cabinet Member Response Under the Highways Act 1980, property owners are responsible for managing overhanging vegetation that poses a danger or obstruction to highways, with authorities having the power of enforcement.

	I am aware that Council Officers are looking into this particular incident with the intention of finding a way to work with the homeowners to address this matter and to ensure that future gritting of the road can be carried out safely and with without avoidable obstruction and delay.
3	**Question from Councillor Armer to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Waste – Councillor Hawkins** "In the calendar year 2025, on how many occasions did this council request/require property owners to address problems related to vegetation obstructing or encroaching a highway?" <u>Cabinet Member Response</u> Data from our enforcement system shows that for 2025: • **62** cases of overgrown vegetation were referred to Enforcement for intervention, and • **29** cases proceeded to formal notice requiring property owners to take action. • These enforcement figures provide the clearest available indication of occasions where the Council requested or required property owners to address vegetation obstructing or encroaching on the highway.
4	**Question from Councillor J D Lawson to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Waste – Councillor Hawkins** "Pavement parking unfortunately is wide spread not only within Crosland Moor and Netherton Ward but Kirklees as a whole. This inconsiderate parking has a detrimental effect on pedestrians, on the disabled and sight impaired, those using mobility scooters and those pushing prams and buggies causing them to have to walk on often very busy roads all because a car or other vehicle driver thought it acceptable to park on the pavement and therefore blocking access. In light of the government proposal to give power to local councils regarding pavement parking can the cabinet lead update on what action the council will take to ensure that Kirklees is ready to start using these powers and able to enforce them over large parts of Kirklees?" <u>Cabinet Member Response</u> At this stage, the Government has not yet issued final details on how any new pavement parking powers will operate in practice, what duties they will place on councils, or what enforcement frameworks will be expected. Until this information is confirmed, we cannot determine exactly how Kirklees will be required, or able, to implement these powers. However, we obviously do welcome any increased powers to address the blight of illegal pavement parking across the district which puts our residents at risk. In the meantime, we are trying to get ahead of the game by monitoring developments so we understand what the emerging legislation may mean for

	local authorities and considering possible options for how future powers could be managed within existing parking and highways processes. All the while, we will be continuing to work with our colleagues in the Police who have current responsibility for enforcement. Once the final national framework is published, we will be able to assess what is required, what is feasible locally, and what options are available for Kirklees. Until then, any planning remains indicative rather than definitive.
5	**Question from Councillor H Zaman to the Cabinet Member for Communities and Environment – Councillor A U Pinnock** "At Cabinet on 21 October, the Leader said burial land is "specialised" because of groundwater, flooding and soil constraints, and therefore can't be compared with land being considered for a new leisure facility in Dewsbury. Can the Cabinet Member confirm what technical criteria the Council uses to assess burial land, how many sites in North Kirklees have been assessed since the burial land motion was passed in February, and how many were ruled out on environmental grounds rather than availability or ownership?" <u>Cabinet Member Response</u> Burial land must undergo significant ground investigatory tests before it can be deemed to satisfy requirements to become suitable for burials. The requirements for cemeteries and the assessment of impacts are based on technical guidance issued by the Environment Agency and must be considered as part of the planning process for new cemeteries. There can also be Environmental Permitting requirements associated with cemeteries, depending on the risk, which are regulated by the Environment Agency. To date, of the 12 sites considered as showing potential for burials, unfortunately none have progressed to the planning stage as other issues such as access, topography, proximity to public transport, highways etc ruled them out. Therefore, the requirement for a detailed groundwater/hydrological risk assessment has not been necessary. A Groundwater/Hydrogeological Risk Assessment (GHRA) for a new cemetery is a mandatory process to ensure burials don't pollute groundwater, involving analysis of soil, water table depth, proximity to water users and burial methods, often led by specialists and required by UK agencies like the Environment Agency for planning permission. The stages of this risk assessment are outlined below: Tier 1 (Desk Study): Initial review of site data, geology, water sources, and burial numbers (e.g., 100+ burials/year triggers higher scrutiny). Dewsbury has over 100 burials a year

	Tier 2 (Preliminary Investigation): Intrusive works (boreholes, trial pits) to confirm geological layers and water table depth below the deepest grave. Tier 3 (Detailed Assessment): Groundwater modelling for complex sites or high-risk scenarios, assessing pollutant movement. Key Factors Assessed: Aquifer type (vulnerability/sensitivity) & local hydrogeology. Depth to water table (must be significantly below deepest grave). Proximity to drinking water abstractions, watercourses, wetlands. Burial techniques & numbers. Goal: Prove sufficient separation/protection (natural or engineered) to prevent unacceptable pollution of groundwater, using the source-pathway-receptor model.
6	**Question from Councillor Scott to the Leader of the Council – Councillor Pattison** "Will the Leader confirm whether options to deal with burial provision in North Kirklees will be brought to Cabinet for councillors to consider?" Leader Response The provision of Burial plots and sites is an operational matter. There is no decision to be taken by cabinet on the matter of burial plots or sites. The Bereavement Service is charged with ensuring this provision and resources are available to it to do so. The current position with regard to all burial sites in Kirklees is available on a dedicated page on the Council's website.
7	**Question from Councillor Scott to the Leader of the Council – Councillor Pattison** "Will the Leader confirm the current position on Muslim burial space in Dewsbury?" Leader Response The current position as of today is there are 2 Muslim vaults/plots available in the Council owned Cemetery in Dewsbury There is a large private Muslim burial facility within Dewsbury that has a significant number of plots available during the day and out of hours. For further details contact the North Kirklees Muslim Burial Council who can confirm the number of available plots. You can find this information at: https://kirkleestogether.co.uk/2026/01/19/burial-provision-in-dewsbury-and-north-kirklees/).

8	**Question from Councillor Scott to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Waste – Councillor Hawkins** "Will the Cabinet Member explain what residents should expect from the permit parking scheme?" <u>Cabinet Member Response</u> Residential permit parking schemes are an optional service offered by the Council and are introduced only in areas where residents experience sustained difficulty parking near their homes. These schemes are developed with the community in mind and allow residents to apply for digital permits for vehicles registered at their property, as well as visitor permits where needed. While a permit does not guarantee a parking space, residents can expect to apply for, pay for, and renew permits online via their My Kirklees account. Current charges are £35 per resident permit per year (with no household limit) and £60 per visitor permit per year (maximum of two per household), with annual increases applied in line with inflation. Kirklees Passport holders are eligible for a 30% discount on all permit types. Civil Enforcement Officers check compliance using live digital permit data. As we have discussed on email, due to my absence from the last Cabinet due to illness, I would like to capture my response to your questions at that meeting here as well, so they are captured in a written format on the public record for absolutely transparency. Residents were not presented with a specific costed "reduced-permit" option during consultation held by the previous administration. Instead, the consultation sought views on whether schemes should be retained, amended, or removed. Affordability concerns raised through comments have been captured and continue to inform the wider review of fees and charging. Where schemes were removed, this was done only when residents submitted a petition demonstrating a clear 60% majority in favour. There is no legal minimum enforcement frequency for permit zones. Enforcement is risk-based and intelligence-led, and while residents are advised that enforcement will take place, it is not continuous. This approach is proportionate and consistent with national practice. If residents believe enforcement is insufficient, reporting issues enables targeted deployment. Enforcement data for the areas of Dewsbury East retaining their scheme will be provided in due course. Further information is available on the Kirklees Council website.
9	**Question from Councillor Darwan to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services – Councillor Kendrick** "What is the percentage change in expenditure on high-cost children's placements in each of the last three financial years, and what formal assessment has been made of the impact of actions taken to control this cost

	pressure?” Cabinet Member Response Ensuring our looked after children and young people have stable, loving homes to live in is central to all we do as a council and corporate parents. We are proud that 65% percent of our 647 children live in family-based settings including foster care arrangements. We are also proud that we have 568 of our children living within extended families through special guardianship order arrangements. Our practice in both areas was commended by Ofsted in our last ILACS inspection in 2024 where we were rated as “Good” A small percentage of our children (42) require a children's home external to Kirklees Council either within Kirklees or outside the borough. When making these arrangements there is very high-level rigour and oversight of decision making and ensuring the right outcomes for our looked after children. We have a range of well-established mechanisms in place to ensure value for money, that children are making progress, that they are safe and protected from harm and that the arrangement remains necessary. This involves routine and regular oversight and challenge from the Chief Executive and Director of Children's Services. In Kirklees although we have seen costs increases our average weekly cost for external residential provision remains below regional and national averages. Our average weekly residential home costs in 2024 were £6,400 per week and in 2025 this has reduced to £6,000 a week. As I’m sure you will be aware post Covid there has been a national and regional sufficiency crisis in finding homes for children and a significant increase in cost which has been reported widely, and has been the subject of a CMA study and is referenced in the McAlister report “Stable homes built on love “ Children's social care: stable homes, built on love - GOV.UK Children's social care market study final report - GOV.UK We are continuing to find creative ways to keep our families together where possible, including funding a new service to support children on the edge of coming into care to stay with their families and opening a new internal child home focused on reunification with families as an outcome. We are also investing in our local foster carers and the support received to ensure where possible more children can live in a family-based setting. Annual gross expenditure between 2023-26 for external residential children's placement 2023/24 = £7,640.3m 2024/25 = £11,239.4m (41.6% increase on previous year) 2025/26 = £14,229m (estimate) (26.6% increase on previous year)

	Cost increase related to increase in placement numbers, fees based on complexity of need, contract or spot purchase arrangements and annual cost of living inflation.
10	**Question from Councillor Darwan to the Leader of the Council – Councillor Pattison (Referred to Councillor Dad)** **"**What is the current rate of turnover among senior and specialist officers, and what formal assessment has been made in the last 12 months of its impact on service delivery, project timescales, and value for money?" <u>Cabinet Member Response</u> Overall turnover is 9.67% and is within the normal range for the sector. Turnover at Head of Service and above is at 8.3% again within the normal range. We also have robust succession planning in place across the organisation to mitigate any risks to service delivery or key projects. This succession planning is especially important in those hard to recruit roles and we currently have 107 apprenticeships in place across the Council; this number includes both traditional apprenticeships and development apprenticeships as part of growth for existing staff.
11	**Question from Councillor Darwan to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Corporate (Councillor Dad)** "Despite repeated budget increases, demand pressures in adult social care continue to rise. What evidence can the Cabinet Member provide that current demand-management strategies are working, and what measurable outcomes have improved in the last 12 months?" <u>Cabinet Member Response</u> Despite the national picture of rising complexity and demand into Adult Social Care, there is measurable evidence that our approach to preventing, reducing and delaying the need for long term care is showing positive impact. The total number of adults receiving long term support has remained broadly stable in the last 12 months. Pressure seen on budgets is primarily due to cost in the market and rising complexity, not volume growth. Through continued best practice activity and our transformation programme we have: **Resolved more at the front door** – while contact to our first point of access increased by around 3%, as at December 2025, the proportion of adults and older people requiring formal adult social care referral shows a decreasing trend. This reflects our strong offer around early advice, signposting and targeted short-term help.

	Supported more people through our short-term services (reablement and intermediate care) to support their independence. Our reablement pathway supports c200 people per month, both through our hospital discharge services (Home First) and community. 43% of those supported go on to have no formal care package. **Reduced the number of older people living in residential and nursing care** and perform above the national benchmark and have seen an increasing number of people living independently at home. **Reduced average package sizes** for new clients in key teams and rightsized existing support through strengths-based reviews, ensuring people receive the help they need—no more, no less. **Increased our use of tech-enabled care (TEC)** – we have invested in assistive technology and are increasing the use across our teams.