

Contact Officer: Leigh Webb

## KIRKLEES COUNCIL

### ECONOMY AND NEIGHBOURHOODS SCRUTINY PANEL

**Thursday 9th July 2020**

Present: Councillor Harpreet Uppal (Chair)  
Councillor Martyn Bolt  
Councillor Richard Murgatroyd  
Councillor John Taylor  
Councillor Richard Eastwood

Co-optees Chris Friend  
Eilidh Ogden  
Andrew Bird

In attendance: Naz Parkar, Service Director for Growth and Housing  
Angela Blake, Service Director for Economy and Skills  
Simon Taylor, Head of Development & Master Planning,  
Growth & Housing

Observers: Councillor Naheed Mather  
Councillor Peter McBride  
Councillor Rob Walker

Apologies: Councillor Yusra Hussain

- 1 Membership of the Committee**  
Apologies were received from Councillor Yusra Hussain.
- 2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**  
That the minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2020 be agreed as a correct record.
- 3 Interests**  
There were no declarations of interest.
- 4 Admission of the Public**  
All items were considered in public session.
- 5 Deputations/Petitions**  
No deputations or petitions were received.
- 6 Public Question Time**  
No questions were asked under this item.

**7 Local Economic Recovery Plan**

Angela Blake, Service Director for Economy and Skills gave a presentation setting out details in relation to the development of the Kirklees Economic Recovery Plan (ERP). The presentation initially highlighted the impact of Covid-19 in Kirklees which included statistics in respect of employment and the increase in benefit claims in the region.

With regard to the objectives of the Plan the following information was set out highlighting the means of supporting economic recovery through:

- Collective investment, procurement and recruitment decisions; use of key property and other assets;
- Funding and support for business resilience and growth; and
- Helping to mitigate the economic impacts of the virus on our most vulnerable residents.

It was further reported that The ERP will:

- Be intelligence-led, driven by emerging evidence on local economic impacts and needs;
- Integrate business and infrastructure investments with interventions to support vulnerable people and achieve inclusive growth; and,
- Balance support for sectors with the potential to deliver growth during the recovery and those that need to strengthen their resilience.

The Council will create a £40m Economic Recovery Fund by:

- Repurposing our Property Investment Fund and Start Up and Retention Fund
- Prioritising other capital investments that will directly support the recovery.
- Continued recourse to funding from Government, the West Yorkshire Combined Authority/Leeds City Region LEP and other sources

The presentation set out existing and new initiatives aimed at supporting business growth, people skills and employment as well as providing information in respect of climate change issues and the green environment.

Questions and comments were invited from Panel Members and the following issues were raised:

- Councillor Bolt highlighted the need for the green economy and active travel initiatives to be at the forefront of the recovery plan and referred to the need to be more proactive with regard to cycling schemes and community asset transfers to community groups. Councillor Mather explained that the plan was a draft, fluid document that was aligned with existing blueprints and the local plan. With regard to active travel measures it was reported that this was being done on a phased basis to support regeneration and an assurance was given active travel was vitally important.

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- Councillor Taylor expressed concern with regard to plans to re-purpose and re-profile the Capital Programme and referred to the implications for the medium term financial plan with regard to planned returns on investments.
- Councillor Taylor highlighted the issue of potential falling rolls at University and the impact for Huddersfield with regard to student accommodation and the student economy. Concerns were also raised in relation to excess office accommodation as a result of the pandemic and the financial implications of this in terms of rental income. Councillor McBride acknowledged the changing nature of office work, which will need to be taken into account as town centre schemes develop and gave an assurance that the reconfiguration and redevelopment of town centres across Kirklees will continue despite the pandemic.
- In response to a question concerning White Rose Forest, Councillor Walker acknowledged the importance of engaging with local ward Councillors.
- Councillor Taylor stressed the importance of a Transport Strategy for Kirklees, which includes reference to strategic linkages north/south as well as east/west.
- Eilidh Ogden highlighted that in order to understand the impacts from the pandemic, detailed data and evidence relating to the impact on particular locations, industries and skills. This will ensure that support and investment is targeted effectively.
- In response to a question from Councillor Murgatroyd concerning a co-operative development agency it was reported that the issue was captured within the West Yorkshire Recovery Plan.
- With regard to the passive house standard of housing development, it was explained that a consultant was being commissioned develop a pilot scheme that would test the environmental principles associated with passive house. Andrew Bird, co-opted member, highlighted the importance of the need for green skills for young people to enable to construction of environmentally efficient housing.
- Councillor Eastwood stressed the importance of getting business support information to local businesses effectively and also the importance of liaising with businesses in respect of plans for active travel initiatives
- Andrew Bird commented that any re-profiling of capital spend should recognise the importance of linking in with the local workforce and maximise spending within the local economy.
- Councillor Mather highlighted that young people are at the centre of plans for economic recovery and stressed the importance of working in partnership to ensure skill levels are developed to the benefit of the local economy.

**RESOLVED –**

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1. That the Panel highlight the importance of emphasising community wealth building as part of the economic recovery plan.
2. That detailed, evidenced modelling continue to be undertaken on particular locations, industries and skills to ensure that support and investment is targeted effectively.
3. That the Panel recognises the importance of new green opportunities with regard to the build environment and supports the continued development of green skills training for the local workforce.

### **8 Huddersfield Blueprint - Update**

Simon Taylor, Head of Development & Master Planning, gave a presentation to the Panel, setting out an update on the following Town Centre Programmes:

- Huddersfield Station Gateway
- Huddersfield St Peters
- Huddersfield Queensgate
- Dewsbury

The presentation set out details of cross cutting generic themes including public realm and housing and provided information relating to governance arrangements in place. Following a commitment from Cabinet, the report considered at a meeting on 16 June, in respect of the George Hotel, was appended to the agenda.

In addition to the Town Centre Programme Update, Tim Lawrence provided details in respect of the Emergency Travel Fund, including details of proposals which build on the place making concepts laid out in the Huddersfield and Dewsbury blueprints. Tranche 1 funding had been received, with Tranche 2 funding due towards the end of August. It was reported that the intention is now to work up a programme across the District, that focusses on an ambitious but deliverable programme of active travel measures. The Active Travel Programme will form part of the Strategic Transport Policy.

Questions and comments were invited from Panel Members and the following issues were raised:

- In response to a question about vacant retail space within Dewsbury Arcade and plans to fill the units, Simon Taylor explained that going forward there are plans for mixed use units including creative workshops. It was acknowledged that as a result of Covid-19 and the rise in internet shopping there will be a need diversify uses within town centre projects.
- With regard to active travel, Tim Lawrence explained that it was the aim to link in with place based working, which would recognise the different nature and need of individual wards. The input of ward councillors will inform decisions.

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- Councillor Bolt commented on the need to consult recognised local cycling groups. Tim Lawrence gave an undertaking to wider consultation will take place in future, to include specific local groups
- With regard to regeneration, Councillor Bolt stressed the need for business plans to be produced and shared. Simon Taylor explained that plans were currently being worked on
- Councillor Eastwood highlighted the need for off road cycle paths to encourage cyclists
- With regard to the George Hotel, it was reported that it was hope to work with Rugby League Care to look at some involvement of the Hotel to tie in with next year's world cup

### **RESOLVED -**

The Panel recognises the opportunities to do things differently as a result of the pandemic, including how the Council invest and how innovative active travel measures can be introduced.

**9**

### **Work Programme 2020/21**

That the Panel's Work Programme for 2020/21 and forthcoming items/activities was submitted.

### **RESOLVED –**

That the Panels Work Programme and forthcoming items/activities be noted.