

Contact Officer: Sheila Dykes

KIRKLEES COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Tuesday 20th December 2022

Present: Councillor Elizabeth Smaje (Chair)
Councillor Andrew Marchington
Councillor Jackie Ramsay
Councillor John Taylor

Observers: Councillor Andrew Cooper
Councillor Moses Crook
Councillor Susan Lee-Richards
Councillor Andrew Pinnock
Councillor Mark Thompson

42 Membership of Committee

Apologies were received from Councillor Yusra Hussain.

43 Minutes of Previous Meeting

Resolved –

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 1st November 2022 be agreed as a correct record.

44 Interests

No interests were declared.

45 Admission of the Public

All items were heard in public session.

46 Deputations/Petitions

No deputations or petitions were received.

47 Public Question Time

No questions were asked.

48 Regional Funding Update

A report was submitted in relation to regional funding activity, with a focus on the funds administered by the West Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (WYMCA).

Edward Highfield - Service Director for Skills and Regeneration and Chris Duffill - Head of Business, Economy and Growth introduced the report which provided details on the main strategic economic development funding streams at regional level, including Gainshare and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF). It also gave an overview of the approach currently being taken including investment

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prioritisation, horizon scanning for future opportunities and overview/monitoring of all funding coming into Kirklees.

The following points were highlighted:

- The Council was taking a proactive approach in terms of the development of outline schemes so that it was able to react quickly when funding opportunities came forward. This was particularly important in light of the limited timescales associated with more recent funding and the element of competition.
- The West Yorkshire Investment Strategy set out the following six investment priorities:
 - Good Jobs and Resilient Businesses (including entrepreneurialism)
 - Skills and training for people
 - Creating Great Places and Accelerated Infrastructure
 - Tackling the Climate Emergency and Environmental Sustainability
 - Future Transport Investment
 - Culture and Creative Industries
- A number of priority/programme areas sat beneath each investment priority and established the focus for intervention over the period April 2021 to March 2024. The aim was to match the local priorities to these regional priorities.

A number of the Kirklees Councillors who were members of one of the WYMCA scrutiny committees were also in attendance at the meeting.

Questions and comments were invited, with the following issues being covered:

- The West Yorkshire devolution deal was for £38 million per annum for 30 years; it was possible for this to be used to secure borrowing to provide additional funding in the earlier years.
- The Sustainable Transport Settlement could and would be utilised towards bus prioritisation, in addition to walking and cycling initiatives, and sat alongside the Bus Service Improvement Plan. This funding would likely be focused on infrastructure improvements, such as improved journey times, pinch points and bus lanes, rather than core subsidy of operators.
- A successful economy required the necessary infrastructure and skills to be in place and it was important that contingency arrangements were established to ensure that improvements were delivered. Despite challenges associated with prioritisation and the current financial climate, the implementation of the thirty-year devolution deal would give greater local certainty, control and autonomy and it was believed that this would have a positive impact.
- Bus provision in some rural areas of the district was limited, particularly in the evening period; and more should be done to support residents of these areas to make the move towards more sustainable transport; a strategic approach was needed.
- The Sustainable Transport Settlement would deliver improved bus stations in Kirklees and whilst it was accepted that this in itself may not improve patronage the Bus Service Improvement Plan would take a more holistic view of what could be done in respect of modal shift.
- It was believed that information should be provided to all Councillors to ensure that they were aware of all ongoing consultations at Combined Authority level. It was also considered that there was a low level of awareness of consultations amongst the general public, at both regional and local level, and that a low

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response rate impacted upon the validity of the results as a representation of the views of the local population.

- In terms of local consultation, this was an issue that was considered by officers and different approaches were being used. The issue of the provision of information to elected members about regional consultations had been raised with the Combined Authority.
- The Council should establish its key aspirations of the Combined Authority as this would assist those Councillors and officers who dealt with the Combined Authority to speak 'with one voice' and engage effectively. This was an area that the Authority was working on, one element of which was a commitment to meet with the members of the WYMCA Transport Committee to provide support and information in advance of its meetings.
- There was also increased interaction between scrutiny members at local and regional level.
- There was little visibility at district level of the work being undertaken at the Combined Authority by Kirklees representatives and there should be some mechanism whereby reports were made to Council. This would also provide a wider understanding of the aims of the Council and a mandate for those representatives.
- In terms of visibility of decisions at Combined Authority level for elected members, this could be challenging in some cases due to the nature of decision-making process and the limited timescales given for responses to the Government. It was suggested that a statement on such decisions could be announced at Cabinet to improve visibility to the wider Council.
- In respect of the status of schemes that had been paused; the position and timescale would depend on a number of factors including external funding.
- The capping of bus fares was a good initiative but there was also a need to track the services being provided over the three-year period, to assess whether communities were being served, over what period and how many had been withdrawn.
- There were risks associated with the element of competitive bidding, particularly in the current climate, and consideration also had to be given to capacity and the resource implications of delivery if a bid was successful. It was also important to try and ensure that work was led by local priorities rather than funding streams. Overall it was believed that the net benefits of devolution outweighed the challenges and risks.
- The UK Shared Prosperity Fund was split into two with a regional element and a local pot that was split between the constituent Councils; the percentage of funding awarded to Kirklees was broadly in line with what would be expected.
- Bradford, Calderdale and Kirklees all had substantial rural areas and could perhaps work together on common causes.
- Kirklees Councillors needed a local brief, alongside an understanding of the complexity of the district and the wider region, and an ability to communicate that, with the aim of achieving a better deal for everyone.
- In terms of the need for a 'place upwards' in addition to the 'strategic downwards' relationship; the aim was to move to a position where the Combined Authority was clear on what Kirklees priorities were. There was also a balance to be achieved between those activities that were best done at regional level and those placed at local level.

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- The Place Standard was an excellent resource that could be used to build a strong evidence base to establish, and argue for, local priorities.
- The fortnightly collaborative meeting between Combined Authority officers and officers from the constituent authorities was welcomed and would help to address some of the issues raised.

Resolved –

That officers be asked to give consideration to the following:

- The need to facilitate a wider awareness of the work of the Combined Authority for Kirklees Councillors.
- The provision of greater support for those Councillors representing Kirklees on the Combined Authority.
- The need for a strategic approach to bus services across the district.
- The use of the Place Standard to build a strong evidence base for local priorities.
- Feedback to the wider Council from Kirklees Combined Authority representatives.

49

Loneliness and Social Isolation in Kirklees

A report was submitted which provided background information to support a discussion about how best to develop local responses to identifying, signposting, and referring people who are lonely or isolated.

Jill Greenfield, Service Director, Customer and Communities, Mark Wearmouth, Service Manager, Local Integrated Partnerships and Helen Gilchrist - Project Manager, Local Integrated Partnerships attended to present the report and respond to Members' questions.

Questions and comments were invited from Committee Members, with the following issues being covered:

- It had been suggested that the guidance document be reviewed and co-produced with wider stakeholders. Committee members had undertaken visits to a number of local support groups to discuss the issues and it was considered that it would be beneficial for there to be wider discussion with individuals about their experiences and the challenges they faced in making connections.
- One of the issues that had been highlighted during the visits was the means by which information on provision/support was made available and the different ways people would choose, or were able to, access it.
- It was recognised that loneliness had a negative impact on mental wellbeing and the acceptance that there was no 'one size fits all' approach was welcomed. It was also noted that being alone did not necessarily equate to being lonely.
- There was significant support and opportunities to connect available within some communities, although it was acknowledged that this may not work as well in some areas. Greater signposting, mapping, and the provision of co-ordination and support to assist in delivery where necessary could bring about improvement.

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- The aim was to try and make loneliness everyone's business and to build on those networks that were already in place.
- The level of awareness of campaigns and events outside members of the partnership steering group.
- The issue of wider engagement with staff and stakeholders was being taken up with partners. It was hoped to encourage and reinvigorate support and accountability for the approach of making loneliness everyone's business.
- Kirklees Cares was an outward facing resource that was currently being soft launched. It had been set up primarily to improve access to information and training in respect of health and adult social care.
- Social prescribing was an excellent way of addressing this issue through the provision of gentle support and guidance.
- There were many opportunities provided by the Council and local communities that allowed and encouraged people to become involved and connect.
- The stories illustrating individual's experiences should be communicated more widely.
- Everyone had a duty to try and identify and communicate with those individuals who may be at risk of loneliness.

Resolved –

That the points raised by the Committee be taken into account in the further development of local responses to identifying, signposting, and referring people who are lonely or isolated.

50 Lead Members' Update

Updates were submitted on the work of the Economy and Neighbourhoods and Corporate Scrutiny Panels on behalf of Councillors Yusra Hussain and John Taylor, the Lead Members.

The updates were noted.

51 Work Programme 2022-23

The current version of the Committee's work programme for 2022-23 was submitted for Members' consideration and noted.