

Contact Officer: Jodie Harris

KIRKLEES COUNCIL

AD-HOC SCRUTINY PANEL - REGENERATION

Thursday 28th July 2022

Present:

Councillor Elizabeth Smaje
Councillor Yusra Hussain
Councillor John Lawson

Co-optees

In attendance:

David Shepherd, Strategic Director for Growth and
Regeneration
Simon Taylor, Head of Town Centres
Joanne Bartholomew, Service Director - Development

Observers:

Apologies: Councillor Andrew Cooper

1 Election of Chair

Members of the Panel were invited to nominate a Chair.

RESOLVED: That Councillor Elizabeth Smaje be appointed as Chair and that the appointment be formally ratified at the next meeting of the Overview and Management Scrutiny Committee.

2 Membership/Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Andrew Cooper.

3 Interests

No Interests were declared.

4 Admission of the Public

All items were considered in the public session.

5 Deputations/Petitions

A deputation was received from a member of the public, Mr Quinn, representing Facebook Group - Huddersfield Town Centre Regeneration and its 5200 members.

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It was noted that the group were supportive of the blueprint and excited by the level of investment in the town centre. Concerns were raised in relation to the lack of inclusion of the old college building in the Blueprint and comparisons were made to the conversion of a similar building in Margate noting its success. It was also noted, that in the view of the group, Cross Church Street should be considered a higher priority for development as one of Huddersfield's oldest and busiest streets.

It was expressed that the group would like the Council to include Viaduct Street in the Blueprint, noting scope to widen the pavement outside the eateries in this location to support businesses. It was also highlighted that consideration should be given to a direct link by foot from the bottom of Northumberland Street to John Smith's Stadium to improve access to a very important part of the town centre economy.

It was noted that a threat to the group was the noncompliance of shops and businesses, some of examples of which had been reported, but no responses had been received. Retail was also highlighted as important noting that this featured predominantly in the public feedback given in 2019. Cinemas, museums, and art Galleries were a welcome addition to town but opportunities for retail in purchasing routine items was equally important.

The Panel thanked Mr Quinn for his deputation and advised that the areas raised had been noted and would be investigated as a part of the Panel's scrutiny of regeneration projects. In response David Shepherd, Strategic Director for Growth and Regeneration highlighted that some of the issues raised would be covered in the presentation to follow as a part of the Councils long term response and highlighted that the Council shared the groups ambition to ensure that the whole of Huddersfield benefits from the regeneration of the town centre including those areas just outside of the boundary. David Shepherd also expressed his understanding of the groups frustrations in relation to planning and enforcement but reassured Mr Quinn that the Council was following the correct processes and agreed to send a response in respect of the issues highlighted around planning enforcement.

RESOLVED: The Panel noted the deputation, and it was agreed that a response be sent to Mr Quinn in respect of the issues highlighted around planning enforcement.

6 Public Question Time

No questions were received from the public.

7 Terms of Reference

The Panel considered its Terms of Reference. It was noted that the Terms of Reference were agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee and included the core key projects, the Huddersfield Blueprint, the Cultural Heart, the Small Centres Programme and the Dewsbury Blueprint.

RESOLVED: The Panel noted the terms of reference.

8 Introduction to Major Regeneration Projects

Cllr Graham Turner, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Regeneration introduced the item highlighted that the Council was making good progress in terms of development and delivery of a significant number of regeneration projects.

In the short-term, upcoming key milestones included reports to be submitted to Cabinet in relation to the Cultural Heart in September and the George Hotel in October. The reports contained significant information to allow the projects to proceed subject to Cabinet approval. The Cabinet had agreed to start work on the Estate Buildings, proceeding to review how to utilise the space to create town centre accommodation. Two documents had been published on the Huddersfield and Dewsbury Blueprint to update residents on progress.

The Panel were then provided with a presentation presented by David Shepherd, Strategic Director for Growth and Regeneration, Joanne Bartholomew, Service Director for Development and Simon Taylor, Head of Town Centre Programmes-Development.

David Shepherd presented the overview and progress update in respect of the Huddersfield Blueprint and it was highlighted that:

- The Huddersfield Blueprint:
 - The Blueprint was set out in 2019 as a 10-year vision for Huddersfield.
 - There was now over £2bn of investment coming into and around Huddersfield Town Centre over the next 10-15 years.
 - This included the investment of key partners such as Network Rail who were sponsoring the TransPennine Upgrade.
 - The Government was spending more than £3bn on the TransPennine Upgrade and £1.5bn of that investment in Kirklees.
 - This upgrade was to include a significant focus on Huddersfield and Dewsbury.
 - It was essential to align local regeneration with the investments in Transport over the next 8-10 years.
 - The Station to Stadium area was also a particularly important area, and a Masterplan for the enterprise corridor was being created.
 - This was to ensure space within and on the boundary of the town centre for businesses to grow.
 - The key aim of the Huddersfield Blueprint was to create a town centre that was fit for the future, family friendly, inclusive welcoming and safe.
 - Within the design a key focus would be working with family friendly partners to create a town centre that was suitable and inclusive to all.
 - It was important for Huddersfield town centre to be seen as a good place to invest.
 - The aim was for existing private sector businesses to flourish, and for new, vibrant, and sustainable businesses to be attracted to opportunities in the town centre.
 - Principals of inclusive place shaping and urban design would be incorporated throughout the design process.

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- The Cultural Heart:
 - Within the Blueprint sat The Cultural Heart which was the Council's single largest investment.
 - It would include the addition of new key facilities in the town centre including a new museum library, art gallery and event spaces.
 - The design aimed to incorporate the town centres current historic aspects such as the town hall.
 - Key Milestones included a report to be submitted to Cabinet for approval in September.
 - This would be followed by a further update to scrutiny and planning application submission in the Autumn.
 - The plans were to start on site development in the Spring of 2023 with an approximate date for practical completion in early 2026.
 - Outdoor spaces and different aspects of the public realm were also an important part of the Cultural Heart.
 - This would include an urban park to create a space for family friendly play, accessible terraces to address the gradients and cultural gardens.
 - There would also be a forward-looking events space for daily and large events with a maximum capacity of approximately 3000 people.

Joanne Bartholomew explained that there were several other key projects at various stages of development and delivery surrounding the Cultural Heart which would help realise the vision for Huddersfield Town centre. In particular, it was noted that:

- The George Hotel:
 - The town needed a good quality hotel offer and this was essential to encourage visitors and wider business regeneration.
 - The delivery of on-site Phase 1 remedial works for the George Hotel had begun and a development manager (Queensbury) had been appointed.
 - A report in respect of the suggested hotel operator was to be submitted to the Cabinet in late summer 2022.
 - The opening of the hotel was predicted to take place in late 2024.
- Northumberland Street:
 - In respect of Northumberland Street development was to take place to improve the market offer on the site of the current open market.
 - This would include an improved public realm, offering shopping creative and leisure opportunities.
 - A significant next step was the submission of a Round 2 Levelling Up Fund Bid of approximately £18m.
 - Progress and outcomes of the bid to be presented to scrutiny in late autumn 2022.
 - If the Council were successful in ensuring the bid, the target date for completion would be around March 2025.
 - Street works on New Street were ongoing, with estimated completion for February 2024.
 - A report had recently been approved by the Cabinet in respect of Town Centre Living.

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- The aim was to utilise heritage buildings to change and diversify the housing offer in Huddersfield town centre.
- The Councils work with the Thirteen Group, a strategic partner of Homes England, were integral to estate building development.
- Connectivity to and from the town centre from a pedestrian and vehicle perspective was important.
- In conjunction with the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) the Council was working to transform and refurbish the Bus Station in Huddersfield Town centre.
- Key outcomes were to make the bus station feel safer, more welcoming and encouraging active travel.

The Dewsbury Blueprint:

- The key priorities of the Dewsbury Town Plan were to make the town feel safer and more family friendly.
- Taking a personal approach to investment, and its spaces should reflect residents want and needs whilst protecting its cultural heritage.
- It was important for the town centre and its spaces to be attractive and well maintained.
- On 8th June 2021, a £24.8m Town Deal grant was approved and was matched by £27m of Council investment.
- The Dewsbury Town Board, which included representation from businesses, elected members and public interest groups had oversight on how the funding was discharged.
- There were 9 key projects included within the Dewsbury Town Investment Plan.
- There was a £3.9m investment + HLF funding into the Dewsbury Arcade and stage 3 designs were now complete. Construction was to start in 2023 for opening in 2024.
- Dewsbury Market was well-used by residents, but the building was in need of significant investment.
- A summer cost review of the design was to take place in 2022, to ensure aspirations for the Market could be met within budget.
- The Council was working with the Town Board and traders to understand the changes to be made by the Council.
- To refurbish the market decanting would be required, the decant option was in place including the addition of containers and pop-up stalls in Dewsbury Town centre.
- The Dewsbury Park would provide space for safe and inclusive family play.
- Public consultation on the stage 3 design was ongoing throughout Summer 2022.
- Following consultation, a planning application would be submitted early 2023, construction late 2024, for opening 2025.
- There was a significant aspiration around Daisy Hill and Fieldhouse.
- Planning approval was obtained for the conversion of vacant Grade 2 listed Fieldhouse building into to 23 apartments.
- Construction would start in quarter 4 in 2022 with planned opening early in 2023.

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- The Daisy Hill area formed a significant part of the Town Centre, and early acquisitions had been completed with the view for wide scale transformation of the area,
- It was important to capitalise the significant amount of construction investment by providing upskilling opportunities.
- This would be done through the creation of a construction village working with Kirklees College.
- Training units would be placed on sites to allow people to learn skills in the area in which the investment was taking place.
- The location of the village would not be permanent, but the philosophy would behind the initiative would be.
- The aspiration was that the Construction Village would provide significant change for young people by increasing their awareness of career opportunities in the construction industry and in turn benefitting local businesses.

Local Centres Update:

- Simon Taylor explained that the Local centres programme was in the early phases of delivery.
- It was agreed by Cabinet in March 2021 that Holmfirth, Batley, Cleckheaton and Heckmondwike would be part of the initial focus.
- Place Standard engagement had been undertaken in all four centres included in the first phase of the programme which provided useful feedback on the future of those centres.
- For Holmfirth, stakeholder meetings were held with consultants on the 21st and 22nd July in respect of the master concepts.
- Public consultation was planned for October/November 2022 with a view for an update to be presented to scrutiny in between late 2022 and early 2023.
- For Cleckheaton, a consultation in respect of the Masterplan was held from the 27th June to the 27th July 2022 and an update to scrutiny was planned for the Autumn of 2022.
- For Marsden, work was being undertaken with MP's in respect of potential bids to government.
- A LUF bid for the Marsden Mill with the Crowther family was due to be submitted 2nd August 2022.
- Renovations were underway on the Mechanics Institute with Council support.
- The Place Standard work was to be launched in Autumn 2022 with an update to scrutiny, subject to approval of the Bid, in early 2023.
- Batley was at the most advanced stage, an LUF bid was being prepared for submission on 2nd August 2022.
- A draft masterplan consultation was planned for September/ October 2022 with an update to scrutiny subject to bid approval in 2023.
- The Bid for Batley included introducing pedestrianisation of Commercial Street ,land acquisition to improve access to the Tesco supermarket and improvements to Market place to create a more useable family friendly area.
- Improved management of traffic to create a quieter more inviting space was also a key priority for this area.
- In respect of Heckmondwike, extra traffic modelling was required around the town centre.

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- Ward councillors were being engaged with and it was noted that they were supportive of ideas put forward and the suggested timeframes.

The Chair thanked officers for the presentation and in the discussion to follow several questions were asked by the Panel.

Responding to a question about the completion of land assembly for the Huddersfield Blueprint, David Shepherd advised that the Council had all the assets/land assembly in place that were required to enable the delivery for the major regeneration programmes set out. He further advised that the Council was working proactively with partners who may be interested in other assets such as Network Rail and the University.

The Panel highlighted the plans set out for regeneration across Kirklees as positive and emphasised the social value that the Construction Village would have in educating and supporting residents. A question was asked around ensuring the sustainability of each individual town and what steps were being taken to prevent local towns from competing with one another to a detriment.

Joanne Bartholomew responded to agree that each town had an individual identity and that it was important to respect this throughout the delivery of the regeneration programmes. Through master planning, the ambition was to ensure the space that was created was for the people that lived in that immediate area and ensuring that the accompanying transport infrastructure made travel to rural centres accessible was key.

Responding to a question from the Panel around decanting the markets, Joanne Bartholomew advised that during the periods of significant construction, that vehicle and movement strategies would be implemented to reduce disruption. This would include understanding desire lines and the impacts of construction on how people move so that retail and residents were not adversely affected. This was also important in terms of accessibility to ensure that alternative navigation options were available for individuals with mobility or sight needs. In response, the Panel welcomed the implementation of the vehicle and movement strategies, and it was agreed that these be presented at a future meeting of the Panel.

Responding to a question from the Panel about the ring roads, Joanne Bartholomew agreed that the ring roads in both Huddersfield and Dewsbury were a barrier in relation to access to the town centre for pedestrians. It was important going forward to find a way to enable pedestrians to cross this easier and had been taken into significant consideration.

Responding to a question from the Panel about future proofing buildings in the town centre, Simon Taylor advised that maximising sustainability was a key priority for each project included in the Cultural Heart. It was highlighted that the development of the District Energy Network was important to note and that all town centre projects would be integrated with the energy network to ensure access to sustainable heat sources. Cllr Graham Turner further reassured the Panel that climate change and sustainability was a key priority of the Cultural Heart adding that the solar panels would be added to buildings wherever possible.

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The Panel noted that the detail of the District Energy Network would be considered by the Economy and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Panel but agreed that as a part of the ad-hoc Panels scrutiny of regeneration projects that consideration be given to climate change and green initiatives.

The Panel highlighted the importance of providing a strong leisure offer in town centre, advising that this was essential to increasing footfall alongside changing the landscape.

In response, Joanne Bartholomew advised that work was being undertaken to look at a family friendly leisure offers where it was appropriate to do so. The Panel noted the response and further requested that partner organisations be invited where appropriate to future meetings regarding retail and leisure offers.

Responding to a question about the wider Communications and Engagement Strategy, Joanne Bartholomew advised the Panel that there was dedicated communications resources supporting the projects and that the strategy included plans for rotations of banners and newsletters to keep information up to date. The Panel welcomed this information but added that it was important to make sure that communications in relation to Regeneration projects did not overshadow other Council work. The Panel also requested that the details of the communications and engagement plans for each project be included in the further updates presented to the Panel.

1. **RESOLVED:** The Panel noted the **Introduction to Major Regeneration Projects** and it was agreed that:
 1. The Vehicle and Movement Strategies be presented at a future meeting of the Panel.
 2. The Panel will consider climate change and green initiatives in relation to regeneration projects throughout its work.
 3. Partner organisations be invited to future discussions to give feedback particularly in relation to the future of retail and leisure offers in the town centres.
 4. The details of the communications and engagement strategies for each project be included in the further updates to the Panel.

9 Meeting Schedule

The Panel considered its meeting schedule for the 2022-23 municipal year in relation to the key dates, stages of development and milestones for each Regeneration project presented by officers.

In respect of the Local Centres Programme, Joanne Bartholomew, Service Director for Development suggested that an overview of the whole programme be presented to scrutiny in the Autumn of 2022 with specific updates for each centre, starting with Cleckheaton, to be held at an appropriate time. The Panel requested that these meetings be held in a place-based manner where possible to enable local partners to attend.

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In respect of Dewsbury and Huddersfield, the Panel suggested that updates on cohesive areas were provided by meeting adding that it was important to have input in the detail of individual schemes at crucial moments whilst maintaining oversight of the wider picture throughout the process. In respect of the Public Realm, the Panel requested that this information be presented to it as an individual update. The Panel also highlighted the importance of making sure that meetings were held with sufficient time prior to Cabinet decisions to enable the recommendations of the Panel to be taken on Board.

Joanne Bartholomew further offered the Panel the opportunity to undertake site visits prior to scrutiny discussions, and the Panel welcomed this suggestion.

RESOLVED: The Panel considered the schedule of meetings, and it was agreed that:

1. Meetings would be held in a place-based way dependent on the items to be discussed.
2. Panel members would be invited site visits prior to discussion at scrutiny.
3. Meetings should be held in good time prior to Cabinet decisions to enable the recommendations of the Panel to be taken on Board.
4. An overview of the Local Centres Programme and an update on Cleckheaton be presented to scrutiny during Autumn 2022.
5. Where there were multiple regeneration projects in one town, that updates be presented by cohesive area.
6. With each update it was important for the Panel to receive information in relation to the wider overarching projects to maintain oversight of developments throughout the process.