

Contact Officer: Jenny Bryce-Chan

KIRKLEES COUNCIL

GROWTH AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY PANEL

Monday 3rd July 2023

Present: Councillor Yusra Hussain (Chair)
Councillor Tyler Hawkins
Councillor Susan Lee-Richards
Councillor Harry McCarthy
Councillor John Taylor

In attendance: Joanne Bartholomew, Service Director Development
Simon Taylor, Head of Town Centres Programme
Thomas Fish, Strategic Partnership Lead, Housing Growth
Isabel Robinson, Apprentice Surveyor

Apologies: Councillor Zarina Amin
Jonathan Milner (Co-Optee)

1 Membership of the Committee

Apologies were received from Cllr Zarina Amin and Jonathan Milner.

2 Interests

Cllr Susan Lee-Richards declared on 'other' interest in respect of agenda item agenda item 8, Small Centres Programme.

Cllr Yusra Hussain, Cllr John Taylor and Susan Lee-Richards declared that they are members of the Housing Improvement Board.

3 Admission of the Public

All agenda items were considered in public session.

4 Deputations/Petitions

No deputations or petitions were received.

5 Public Question Time

No public questions were asked.

6 Introduction to the Growth & Regeneration Directorate

Joanne Bartholomew Service Director Development, advised the Panel that the aim of this agenda item is to provide the panel with an overview of the role of the Growth and Regeneration Directorate. As part of the session a video will be shared with the

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panel, which highlights some of the wider developments in the Council and showcases some of the work being undertaken. The session will also include why investment matters, and how cultural heart will be showcased.

In summary, the Panel was informed that one of the key considerations for the council, is ensuring that the district is strong and has a really deep seated, sustainable economy that allows all residents to have a great quality of life, leading to thriving communities, growing businesses, high prosperity, and low inequality. That is the aspiration, but how is that going to be delivered. In order to deliver a sustainable, economic growth across Kirklees, that puts people, partners, places at the heart of it, there are three key services across the directorate, Skills and Regeneration, Development, and Homes and Neighbourhoods.

Skills and Regeneration includes:

- Major projects
- Business and Economy
- Employment and skills
- Planning

Development includes:

- Housing Growth
- Corporate Landlord and Capital
- Housing Services
- Town Centres

Homes and Neighbourhood includes:

- Operations
- Asset Development
- Housing Management and Partnership

Development, which includes housing growth, aims to ensure that there are enough houses, and the right type of houses, and the right sort of tenure of houses for all local residents. Work is being undertaken utilising the Council's land, working with other developers to bring forward housing states, making sure that at the heart of this is the Council's carbon agenda and inclusivity, encouraging both affordable and lifetimes homes to be built.

Development also includes Corporate Landlord and Capital Delivery Services, that is everything that is in the current build environment that the Council owns. The council is a large asset owning council, with over 130 buildings, and there is a significant amount of capital investment across the wider estate creating new affordable spaces as well as creating some dementia friendly spaces. There is also investment in children centres and children's care homes.

Housing Services is in essence, the front door to Homes and Neighbourhood, the third area of the Directorate. Housing Services ensures that people who find themselves in the position of wanting to understand whether they can get social housing, are given an allocation and also where they are not entitled to social housing or where there wait for social housing may be considerable they are helped

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to access private options. It also deals with homelessness and refugee and migration resettlement.

On the agenda today for discussion is small centres, where the aim in the town centres is to create vibrant towns and villages across the district, creating a sense of economic prosperity, and managing and utilising the assets and those of partners.

The other two areas that are under Councillor Turner's portfolio, are skills and regeneration, where major projects are undertaken, for example the A62 corridor, working with WYCA around bus station and rail network improvements. There is business and economy and understanding how to maximise the Kirklees pound, particularly through social value, but also how to grow current businesses and encourage other businesses.

Employment and skills, looks at post 16 skills around employment and skills, encouraging people to do career change or encouraging people who have experienced worklessness back into the working environment. There is also planning service, which deals with the statutory responsibility around planning requirements, to ensure that homes and the local plan is being delivered.

The final part of the directorate is Homes and Neighbourhoods, which looks after the Council's housing stock. There are over 22,000 homes that people live in and the operation for managing, maintaining, ensuring that they are safe, warm, and compliant is done in that particular area. Housing Management and Partnerships, works in conjunction with housing services to ensure that people are supported to live their best lives in their homes.

The aim in Growth and Regeneration, is to ensure that everybody gets the best quality of life and having increased productivity through better housing, skills, and jobs, meaning better wages and better quality of life for residents. Business growth will result in improved productivity, and the more startups, the more improved business survival and expansion of some of the key high growth businesses which will create more and better jobs.

The investment in the town centre, which has started both in Huddersfield and in Dewsbury with the George Hotel in Huddersfield and with the Arcadian Dewsbury, are key parts of both of the blueprints and town deal. This reduces risk and encourages significant external investment, as it creates confidence in what the Council is doing and will help to secure further funding.

Partnership investment has been over 2 billion confirmed since the blueprints were announced, and nearly £40 million worth of external funding has been brought into the Council's projects.

There are a key number of political priorities that the portfolio holders have set over the last year and going forward. These range from individual projects such as the George Hotel and the Trans-Pennine upgrade, to wider initiatives such as tenant voice and tenant safety and include issues included on today's agenda around housing growth and small centres.

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The Panel was informed that over the next five years, the council will be looking at delivering significant new homes. The first phase of Dewsbury Riverside will be around 2 1/2 thousand homes. In Ashbrow and Soothill, the aim is to build 610 new homes, including 54 affordable homes and a significant amount of extra care provision.

In terms of tenant satisfaction across homes and neighbourhoods, the aim is to ensure that tenants are kept safe and that their homes are compliant and that they feel valued, and their voices are heard in terms of decision making around their home. This will hopefully lead to a reduction in complaints and cases of disrepair and lead to much more collaborative decision making.

Where appropriate, the intention will be to look to transfer corporate assets to the community and work in support with locality, to ensure that community groups are structured and able to take on assets.

With regard to transportation and infrastructure, work is being undertaken with active travel in North Kirklees, with some evidence towards a shift towards people walking and travelling and making transport infrastructure more sustainable. Significant road network improvements have been carried out in Huddersfield and those have just finished.

The initiative with White Rose Forest and the Calder catchment, will have over 670 hectares of new tree coverage and will have over 1000 hectares of green streets in West Yorkshire.

The Station to Stadium Enterprise Corridor, and the investment zone associated with it, is moving forward with increasing private sector jobs and investment and there has been significant interest in the Station to Stadium Enterprise Corridor and the works on the A62 corridor has strengthened that.

Working with the college, over 900 extra learner places has been delivered through the process manufacturing centre, and a significant increase in apprenticeship and work placements offer.

RESOLVED:

That Joanne Bartholomew be thanked for providing an introduction to the Growth and Regeneration Directorate.

7 Housing Delivery Plan Update

Cllr Graham Turner introduced the Housing Delivery Plan update report, advising that it is a detailed report which outlines work currently being undertaken and projects in the pipeline and had recently been to Cabinet.

Joanne Bartholomew informed the Panel that by 2026, there will be 900 more homes. Often the talk is about building houses, however, it is important to remember that it is building homes for people, much needed homes across the

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district. There are some key strategic sites, and the Panel will be updated on the two main ones, and also some of the other works in the pipeline going forward, giving consideration around affordability and a mix of housing.

Thomas Fish, Strategic Partnership Lead, gave the Panel an overview of the appended report, advising that the first part of the report covers broadly what the team are involved in, and the program of works including some of the sites that are ongoing or in the process of starting. There are sites within the program, which are Council owned, including the two strategic sites, Bradley Park, and Dewsbury Riverside.

The Council also works with funding bodies such as the West Yorkshire Combined Authority and Homes England, for any opportunities and funding programs that they have. For example, the accelerated construction program, in terms of the Soothill site, which used Homes England funding. There is work on the town centre living plans linked to the blueprints, looking at specific properties within Huddersfield Town centre and within Daisy Hill, using the town's fund funding.

The team works and sits on specialist supported housing forums within the Council, and also works closely with colleagues in housing services and planning, to secure affordable homes. Work is also being undertaken talking to register providers about the developments they are doing off their own merit, but also ones where the council looks to partner with them to deliver the Council sites.

There is also the Brokerage Service which looks at sites which may have stalled in the system or developers might need advice. The service provides specialist knowledge or help with partnership working with developers or registered providers who are interested in investing within Kirklees.

The appended report also touches on first homes, which is a very specific technical element linked to affordable housing. The service consults on planning applications and provide specialist advice. Previously, there had been discounted market housing, there has also been starter homes and the latest iteration of a government discounted housing is first homes, which is part of the affordable housing that has to be delivered for housing sites across the district.

The Panel was informed that in terms of the sites, a great deal of work is going into each one of these sites, and there are many project managers working on different elements. The first site is Bradley Park, a large allocation within the Kirklees local plan. The Council owns a significant piece of the site and has been working using West Yorkshire Combined Authority funding on feasibility work. Following the recent Cabinet decision, an allocated budget has been agreed to take that feasibility work forward. Moving forward and looking at taking the sites to the next steps, the aim is to appoint a partner or a developer to progress the work.

In respect of Dewsbury Riverside, the largest allocation in the local plan, the Council owns 30 hectares of the 160 hectare site. There has been a lot of work that has been undertaken recently to relocate allotments to facilitate the central access into the site, where 43 replacement allotments have been constructed.

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There was a Strategic Planning decision taken in November 2022, on the first phase application for up to 350 homes on the Council's land. Working collaboratively with West Yorkshire Combined Authority and Homes England, to look at the master plan and reviewing where is suitable, based on the changes that have happened since the local plan was adopted.

There will be the benefit of the Transpennine route upgrade and the new station, which will be built on site. The allotments have been replaced and reflecting on any planning policy changes that have happened. There will be more work going forwards, including significant engagement with the community over the next 12 months in taking Dewsbury Riverside to the next stages of development.

With regard to the town centre and the Huddersfield Blueprint, the two buildings that are being focused on at this time, are Estate Buildings and Somerset Buildings. Working with 13 Housing Group, who are in Northeast strategic partner who deliver affordable homes and also worked on centre regeneration in the Northeast and elsewhere. They are currently looking at the possibilities of regenerating and reusing those buildings for housing. Over the next year, working alongside 13 Housing Group and supporting them to look at those options and hopefully move forward on Town Centre living opportunities. 103 New Street project is nearly at completion, and is four student accommodation and people are currently living there.

In terms of Dewsbury, there has been the Daisy Hill neighbourhood, which is a key project within the Dewsbury Blueprint which is in the town investment plan alongside the other projects that got Town Fund funding.

The Panel was given examples of other schemes and projects and informed that there are some bungalows for older people and accommodation for people who have recently become homeless, gateway properties which was a real success story.

In respect of some of the other sites where there is partnership with private sector, the Ashbrow scheme will deliver 98 market for sale homes, 13 homes for affordable rent and 50 homes within the Council's Extra Care Scheme. The project, particularly the Extra Care Scheme, has been challenging to get started, in the context of volatile construction market conditions and the aim is to complete it by September 2024.

It has taken a lot of resources and officer time to assist the developers because of the wider economic context of what has been happening over the last couple of years where developers have struggled, and the council has tried to support them.

The Panel was informed that the council is working with 13 Housing Group, one of Homes England's strategic partners, to deliver around 200 affordable homes on five sites located across the district. Cabinet approval was secured in July 2022, to dispose of the sites to Thirteen Group.

Information was given on the Housing Brokerage Service which operates to provide assistance, where needed, for stall housing development sites across Kirklees.

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The Panel was directed to the report which showed a table that provided a summary of what has been delivered, what is being delivered, or what will be delivered in the near future around the program.

In response to the information presented, the Panel asked questions and made comments including some of the following:

- The report refers to responding to the needs of the population and meeting local needs, based on getting information and intelligence, how are local people defined and who is being asked?
- The information does not give a breakdown of the size and stock that developers are being asked to deliver, whether they are 2, 3 or 4 bedroomed houses, is it possible to get this information including the number of bedrooms in the properties?

RESOLVED:

That Joanne Bartholomew and Thomas Fish be thanked for providing an update on the Housing Delivery Plan.

That information be brought to a future panel meeting which gives a full breakdown of the proposed housing stock including number of bedrooms

8 Small Centres Programme

Cllr Graham Turner, Portfolio holder, introduced the agenda item, advising that the appended report, outlines progress on small town centres. There are four town centres being concentrated on with the possibility of a fifth, looking longer term at Marsden in light of some funding that has been received. There has been a lot of work to get to this stage and some are more advanced than others and some have been more challenging, however progress is being made. Some extra funding has been levered in to help deliver these, with the cost pressures, the external funding has to be welcomed.

Simon Taylor, Head of Town Centres Programmes advise the Panel that in summary, it is four towns, Batley, Cleckheaton, Heckmondwike and Holmfirth, four continuous engagement programmes and four projects to get off the ground. This programme is the council trying to strengthen local centres, recognising those are important places for people to live, work and do business. It is an important program that is being expanded to include a fifth centre, Marsden. The Panel was given a breakdown on the progress being made in each of the centres.

In summary;

Batley

Batley has been overtaken by a levelling up process and in many ways it is one of the success stories of starting to develop plans and programs in a particular area.

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Without the initial work that had been carried out, around local centres, the levelling up bids in round two would have been weak. It has gone from a small allocation of £2.5 million and that has been increased to £14.38 million, which is a great achievement and work is on with developing that.

In terms of the process undertaken in Batley, place standard exercises were carried out early, which was used to inform the master planning process. Some extra work had also been carried out in Batley as there was some extra funding, and this gave a clear idea of what people were wanting around their town centre. This information was fed into the masterplan, and engagement on that was undertaken last year.

In terms of Batley, the programme is concentrating on Commercial St, which is the main street that runs through the middle of Batley, and also looking at how to improve Marketplace.

Cleckheaton

Cleckheaton was one of the programs that got off the ground quickly. A scrutiny session was held early this year, at the end of the master plan program, and then followed an almost identical process to Batley. One place standards engagement was held using the ward councillors as key reference points, and now there is a completed master plan and a number of key schemes that ward councillors and communities want to be delivered. The schemes identified for development and delivery include Savoy Square and Market, Spen Bottom and Market Square.

Heckmondwike

Heckmondwike is slightly behind the others, and is just at the end of the masterplan consultation period, which ended on the 19th June 2023, and the team are examining all those results. A number of projects were put forward in that plan, Greenside Public Realm, which is around a potential road closure to the top side of Greenside to bring the park closer to properties and to the bus station. Examining the results from the consultation to see whether or not the place standards exercise was right, and see what the public think of some of those ideas.

There is other funding going into Heckmondwike that comes from West Yorkshire Combined Authority. Heckmondwike bus station will get delivered this year and there is almost £5 million going into that project. There are some other works on the A638 corridor which are around traffic management in the town centre. The hope is that Heckmondwike, once we get through this next phase, will have some very clear projects that will be delivered.

Holmfirth

Holmfirth has been a programme of works for a number of years, that started with the Holmfirth access plan, which is close to being delivered. Since then, a more generic and town wide plan has been wrapped around that. An additional, £1.5m

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has been put in on top of the Holmfirth access plan and that is for projects that will complement the town and also complement that particular scheme.

A number of these town centre schemes have secured UK SPF funding so that these projects can be developed rather than using Council capital. The place standard exercise has been carried out and the master plan consultation has also been undertaken. The master plan has been completed which has been signed off by the portfolio holders. Aside from the access plan, there are three key projects that the community are pointing us towards. One is to look at Towngate, one is looking at access along the river and another is small scale transport projects including gateways into the town and park and stride.

The main project is the access scheme, and the indicative start date for that is September 2023, and it is an 18 month building programme.

There is now a fifth that has been added to the original four small centres and that is Marsden.

Marsden

Marsden has been included for a number of reasons; one is successful levelling up fund bid at the back end of last year. The other is around the impending Transpennine route upgrade works, and that will particularly affect Marsden station and the land around there and some recent investment into the cycle path between Slaithwaite and Marsden.

The Marsden levelling up fund bid is the key factor, effectively there will be almost £20m going into a derelict mill at the very heart of the town centre. The funding from levelling up is the gap funding, valued at almost £6m, the rest of that will come from the private sector.

The mill covers a large proportion of the town and conservation area, and the work will be quite impactful. It is a commercial project, largely office space workshops, some retail with some potential for residential. Long term, the project is being run by the landowners and a developer partner, but ultimately it is a significant change for Marsden.

The intention of adding it to the list, is to ensure that there was some other plans for the rest of the town to complement that. Cabinet have now agreed to move forward on a master plan in Marsden and that work will start quite quickly.

RESOLVED

That Simon Taylor be thanked for providing an update on the Small Centres programme.