

Contact Officer: Sheila Dykes

KIRKLEES COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Tuesday 1st August 2023

Present: Councillor Elizabeth Smaje (Chair)
Councillor Bill Armer
Councillor Andrew Cooper
Councillor Yusra Hussain
Councillor Jackie Ramsay

12 Membership of Committee

All Members of the Committee were in attendance.

13 Minutes of Previous Meeting Resolved –

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 20th June 2023 be agreed as a correct record.

The Chair updated the Committee as follows:

The meeting of the Committee held on 6th February had considered reports in relation to the Kirklees Communities Partnership Plan, the Annual Strategic Impact Assessment, and the Domestic Abuse Strategy.

Responses to the issues raised at the meeting had been shared with Members of the Committee in respect of:

- The reporting of speeding offences using the Police online crime reporting portal.
- Responses made/action taken in response to the data gathered from speed indication devices and how this is shared with partners.
- How data in respect of collisions not involving injury is collated and utilised.
- An update on widening the provision of 'safezones', particularly in the Rural and Batley and Spen areas
- The approach being taken across adjacent NHS Trusts in relation to the identification of people who may need support due to domestic abuse.

and these would be noted in the next formal report to the Committee, along with the response to the other issues raised.

14 Interests

During the meeting, and in the interests of transparency, Councillor Smaje disclosed that she was a trustee of a building that had been subject to a community asset transfer.

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee - 1 August 2023

15 Admission of the Public

All items were considered in public session.

16 Deputations/Petitions

No deputations or petitions were received.

17 Public Question Time

No questions were submitted.

18 Kirklees Active Leisure

Adele Poppleton the Service Director, Culture and Visitor Economy, who was responsible for managing the relationship with Kirklees Active Leisure (KAL) on behalf of the Council, and the Chief Executive of KAL, Alasdair Brown, were in attendance and gave a presentation which highlighted the following:

- The background to the establishment of KAL, in 2002, to manage leisure facilities throughout Kirklees.
- The partnership agreement with the Council had been extended, for a period of twenty years, in 2012.
- KAL was an independent, not for profit, charitable trust, with a Board of twelve trustees including two Councillors.
- The KAL offer included provision of preventative health and wellbeing work.
- The customer base and the diversification undertaken in the last few years.
- Mapping of visits from inside and outside the district.
- The role of KAL as a local employer and the staff demographic.
- Ratio of funding to turnover.
- The current key challenges for the organisation and the measures taken, and being taken, to respond to the financial pressures.
- The Leisure Centre Review Programme, which was taking a strategic approach to the future offer and long-term operating model for the leisure centres.
- The purpose and membership of the Leisure Centre Review Programme Board and some of the mapping, data collection, benchmarking and analysis undertaken to date.
- The range of potential options for the model of operation.
- Next steps and timeline.

Councillor Paul Davies, the Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Corporate Portfolio, was also present. He stressed the need to establish a sustainable service in the long-term and that significant detailed work was ongoing so that the necessary decisions could be made.

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

- All the possible operational models were under consideration in the first instance and a shortlist would be agreed after further study and evaluation.
- The application to the Swimming Pool Support Fund, administered by Sport England, would cover those pools that were at risk of closure and would entail a commitment from the Authority to ensure that those pools would remain open for three years. This potential funding was welcomed.

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee - 1 August 2023

- In respect of the level of expertise and capacity in place to explore and develop alternative income streams, it was considered that KAL was pro-active in this area. There was a very strong partnership with the Council and work was also undertaken with other leisure operators to ensure awareness of what commercial opportunities might be available, a number of which had already been introduced.
- In terms of the suggestion that decision-making processes may be quicker in a model with less political/local authority involvement; the strengths and weaknesses of each of the options were being considered but it was acknowledged that the significant investment by the Kirklees must be monitored to ensure due diligence of this public money.
- Clarity on the financial implications of the different options would be available at a later stage.
- Consideration had and continued to be given to a cross-authority collaborative approach.
- The importance of the links with health and wellbeing and the scope for joint working on preventative programmes was emphasised.
- Public Health and Communities were included in the membership of the Review Programme Board to ensure that this focus was maintained.
- The offer in terms of certain seasonal activities had narrowed due to the challenges being faced. The provision of these services could be financially demanding which meant they would be more likely to be impacted in the current circumstances.
- The work undertaken on energy management to date had been excellent. Further investment in respect of energy efficiency and performance would be beneficial for the future but was highly unlikely to be viable at this time.
- It was noted that the issues for KAL were associated with the costs of staffing as well as energy costs.

Resolved -

- (1) That the Service Director, Culture and Visitor Economy and the Chief Executive of KAL be thanked for attending the meeting and their comprehensive and informative presentations.
- (2) That the views of the Committee be sought during the review consultation period and that the results of the analysis of the different models of operation be provided to members of the Committee when available.
- (3) That the importance of the links with health and wellbeing be acknowledged.

19 Leader of the Council - Priorities 2023-24

Resolved –

That the item be deferred until the October meeting of the Committee.

20 Portfolio Priorities 2023-24

Councillor Carol Pattison, the Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Learning, Aspiration and Communities Portfolio, was in attendance at the meeting. Her portfolio included crime and disorder and community safety, the scrutiny of which fell within the remit of the Committee.

She explained that her key priority in this area was working with women and local organisations and understanding their lived experience to drive culture change and

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee - 1 August 2023

ensure services respond appropriately. This tied in with the priority within the Communities Partnership Plan to tackle violence against women and was also a priority for the Mayor of West Yorkshire.

There was a desire to address the cause, rather than focussing on dealing with the symptoms or outcomes of the violence, and this would be supported by a number of programmes of work with partners, including the adoption of a pledge to encourage action in respect of the culture within their organisations.

Councillor Paul Davies, the Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Corporate Portfolio presented his priorities for 2023/24 as follows:

Finance –

- Measures were being taken to address the current challenges facing the Authority and achieve financial stability, including plans to reduce the cost base and to increase income, but with the clear aim that the provision of the services and support that residents need will continue.
- Prioritisation and consideration of need would be inevitable.
- There were well-established structures for reporting and information was being shared with a cross-party group.
- Reviews of targets, including the achievement of savings, were being undertaken, at a minimum, on a monthly basis.
- More in-depth reviews, with input from scrutiny, would be undertaken into any specific areas of concern.

Cost of Living –

- Continued to be a focus in light of continued pressures on local people, with a particular concern currently being food inflation.
- Approaches would address the short, medium and longer term and would be integral to the Council's work across all directorates.
- Creation of resilience within communities was very important in order to establish sustainable solutions.
- There was also a continued commitment to support and develop the local economy and regeneration.

Assets –

- A core portfolio of retained assets would be developed with an understanding of what was needed to facilitate the provision of services and good working conditions within the financial constraints.
- Capital receipts from disposal would be considered alongside measures to reduce revenue spend on maintenance.
- Short and longer term solutions would be considered in each case.
- Community asset transfers would be considered, where appropriate,
- A focus on maximising the use of assets to ensure that they were being fully utilised.

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

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee - 1 August 2023

- In respect of the affordability of the regeneration plans for Huddersfield Town Centre, the risks had been carefully considered and it was believed that these investments were crucial to the creation of more economic wealth and the support of residents in maintaining a vision and hope for the future. Re-phasing of gateways had been undertaken and an assurance was given that the finances would continue to be reviewed. It was noted that the Growth and Regeneration Scrutiny Panel would be maintaining a detailed overview of the district's major regeneration projects.
- In addition to the economic and other factors, such as the impact of the pandemic, that would affect all local authorities, there was a whole range of key elements which varied across different authorities but which had a cumulative effect, these included the levels of reserves and levels of income (from business rates and Council Tax), the level of deprivation, pressures from demand continuing to rise in a number of services areas and the distribution of funding by central government. It would be helpful if this could be looked at retrospectively on a regional and national basis to understand how the current position for local authorities had been reached.
- The Cost of Living Action Programme could be shared with Committee Members.
- Where issues of sustainability were being experienced by groups that had been party to a community asset transfer, work was being undertaken to identify other community groups that might be able to take over.
- The crucial role of the voluntary and community sector, and the importance of partnership working with the Council and the need to ensure sustainability and resilience was recognised.
- Pre-decision scrutiny of the Asset Management Strategy was included within the Committee's Work Programme.
- The targeting of resources towards those with most need was supported. More affluent areas tended to be more resilient than those in more deprived areas in terms of the voluntary and community groups and this should be taken into account.
- It was noted that there could be pools of deprivation within otherwise affluent communities and also that the loss of key people within a community group could have a significant impact.

21 Council Financial Management - Energy

The Committee received a presentation in respect of a review of the Council's arrangements and budgets for energy, by Dean Langton, the Service Director, Finance and Section 151 Officer. The following points were highlighted:

- The impact of the global energy crisis on prices.
- The steps taken by the Authority to address the impact of the increase in prices including re-procurement and plans to reduce usage through asset rationalisation and energy efficiency measures.
- The current approach to procurement and contractual arrangements.
- The difference between domestic and business energy pricing.
- The annual costs over the last three years.
- The top ten users of electricity and gas within the Council.

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee - 1 August 2023

- The budget for energy for 2023/24.
- The measures undertaken to improve efficiency, consumption and monitoring.

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

- In terms of the review of opportunities for implementing energy efficiency measures and renewable energy, including the re-appraisal of the cost effectiveness of investment based on changing conditions, it was explained that the Council had a dedicated Energy and Climate Change Team. This team was working toward delivering the Council's Climate Change Action Plan. Opportunities to improve energy efficiency, including government funding, would be considered as they arose but it was noted that such investment, in the current financial climate, was going to be a challenge.
- A response could be provided to members in relation to the use of green electricity suppliers and whether the additional premium would be better used for investment into energy efficiency and renewable energy.
- Data centres were significant users but also produced a lot of heat.
- Energy impacts were always considered as part of the integrated impact assessment on any proposals and was a priority.
- It was the duty of all to identify any opportunities to make savings.
- There was an active Green Employee Network which had put forward a number of ideas and suggestions.
- It would be helpful to study best practice nationally.

22 Kirklees Scrutiny Work Programme 2023-24

The Work Programmes/Agenda Plans for the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee and the four standing Scrutiny Panels; Children's, Environment and Climate Change, Growth and Regeneration, and Health and Adult Social Care, were submitted for the Committee's consideration.

The Chair of each body gave a brief overview of the key issues that they wished to address during 2023/24. It was acknowledged that the programmes could change during the year.

Resolved –

That the Committee and Panel's Work Programmes for 2023/24 be endorsed.

23 Any Other Business

The Chair reported that Richard Dunne was retiring from the Council after seventeen years having worked with various scrutiny bodies during that time. Members thanked Richard for his excellent support and wished him a happy retirement.