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## KIRKLEES COUNCIL

### ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE SCRUTINY PANEL

**Wednesday 21st February 2024**

Present:

Councillor Timothy Bamford  
Councillor Hannah McKerchar  
Councillor Matthew McLoughlin  
Councillor Will Simpson  
Councillor John Taylor

Co-optees

Garry Kitchin

In attendance:

Katherine Armitage, Service Director - Climate Change &  
Environmental Strategy  
Robert Green

Observers:

Apologies:

- 1 Appointment of Chair**  
**RESOLVED:** That Councillor Hannah McKerchar be appointed as Chair for the duration of the meeting.
- 2 Membership of the Panel**  
No apologies were received.
- 3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**  
The Panel considered the Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 10<sup>th</sup> January 2024.  
**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the previous meetings be approved.
- 4 Declaration of Interests**  
No Interests were declared.
- 5 Admission of the Public**  
All items were considered in the public session.
- 6 Deputations/Petitions**  
No deputations or petitions were received

### 7 Public Question Time

No public questions were received.

### 8 Environment Strategy: Everyday Life

The Panel considered the Environment Strategy: Everyday Life presented by Katherine Armitage, Service Director - Environmental Strategy and Climate Change. Councillor Aafaq Butt, Cabinet Member for Culture and Greener Kirklees was also in attendance.

During the presentation it was explained that;

- The Environment Strategy aimed to address the climate emergency whilst also tackling the ecological emergency and broader social and economic challenges.
- The Strategy was a high-level partnership framework which aimed to achieve a more environmentally sustainable future.
- It outlined the vision to harness the power of the natural environment to improve the lives of people living, working and studying in Kirklees.
- The detailed plans for the delivery of the targets set out in the overarching strategy were incorporated into the various policies and documents beneath it.
- The Strategy had been co-designed with key stakeholders including 1039 residents and 549 representatives of partner organisations, businesses, institutions and community groups.
- The Strategy was organised into 4 pillars which covered 12 targets and 31 wider objectives. The 4 pillars were:
  - **Closing The Loop:** Tackling waste through ensuring all products, systems and services are designed to maximise value and minimise waste.
  - **Nurturing Nature:** Nature recovery and biodiversity, including a reinforced local plan and nature-based solutions for issues like flooding, woodland creation, and peatland restoration.
  - **Bringing It Home:** Renewable energy and more sustainable neighbourhoods, including net zero new housing and a focus on reducing fuel poverty through renovating homes to be greener
  - **Kirklees On The Move:** Better, greener transport options for all, including better rural bus connections, more walking and cycling and a radically improved Electric Vehicle charging network.
- The Strategy also set out 3 key priorities which underpinned all work streams including:
  - **Sustainable Economic Development:** Supporting sustainable opportunities for growth and avoiding short-term economic plans that worked against nature and climate targets.
  - **Resilient Futures:** Nurturing 'Climate ready' communities, making them better prepared for the impacts of climate change, and coping with the effects, especially for the most vulnerable.
  - **Environment for All:** Supporting fairness, greater inclusion, diversity, and accessibility, particularly for underrepresented communities, minority groups or those with disabilities.

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- The vision set out in the strategy was to be implemented through a partnerships pledge to enable collective action and deliver the ambition for the district.
- The voluntary pledges asked for a two-fold commitment to act and monitor progress.
- 10 partners had already pledged in advance of approval of the strategy by Cabinet and more pledges were anticipated following the completion of internal governance processes.
- Effective governance was key to ensure that the relevant monitoring, evaluation, and reporting was undertaken to translate the strategy into tangible change.
- To achieve change work was needed across services to embed the ambition within policies, processes and governance.
- As a Council a Learning and Organisational Development module was to be launched to colleagues across all services to embed the principles of the strategy into day-to-day work.
- Building on previous successes there were plans to explore innovative and mainstream ways to resource measures, including recirculating cost-savings in areas such as reduced energy use, Biodiversity Offsets, Net Gain and Natural Capital Accounting, S106 and the Community Interest Levy.
- Funding programmes and co-funding opportunities with Partners would also be pursued.
- The next steps were to seek approval for the Strategy from the Cabinet, and thereafter the Council.
- In the meantime, work would continue to obtain partnership support and ‘pre-approval’ pledges as well as the development of a communications plan for a launch of the strategy and the partnership pledge.

In noting the presentation, the Panel welcomed the collaborative approach taken to the co-production and development of the strategy. In the discussion to follow questions and comments were invited from the Panel, with the following issues being covered:

- In response to requests from the Panel for more detail around the plans to deliver the ambition to restore degraded Peatland by 2038 it was explained that:
  - The targets included in the strategy were in line with the Environment Act and other reports in relation to Peatland.
  - Moors of the Future were one of the pre-approval pledges received.
  - The Calder and Colne Valley landscape recovery project included taking a multi-pronged approach to achieving outcomes in relation to land recovery where the core objective was to work with landowners to better manage landscapes.
- In relation to the projection of the cost of transition it was confirmed that this was a combination of public and private investment and as recommended by the Panel it was agreed that this be made clear in the strategy.
- In relation to the reference to high inflation in the strategy, the Panel recommended that:

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- The statement be revisited prior to presentation to Cabinet to ensure the most up to date information be included at the time of consideration.
  - It be highlighted in the strategy that reliance on fossil fuels increased vulnerability national to inflationary pressures.
- In response to a question from the Panel about the role of the Environment Group, it was confirmed that the Group was one of the key partners engaged in the co-production of the strategy and had pledged to the document. A continuous dialogue would be maintained with the group as they evolved as an organisation.
- In response to concerns raised by the Panel around reliance on HR resources to measure impact it was noted that it was important to balance the cost benefits and use of officer/resource time against the value of the type of assessments undertaken.
- In response to concerns raised by the Panel around setting out ambitious targets without a clear plan for delivery it was advised that clear targets for delivery, benchmarking and interim milestones were included in various action plans sitting within the overarching Environment Strategy some of which were already in existence (i.e -the Climate Change Action Plan) and some were to be developed to follow.
- In response to concerns raised by the Panel around realistic scope for delivery of headline targets i.e.- (i) all building in Kirklees to be energy efficient to a minimum of EPC band C by 2030 and (ii) all residential properties to be within 1km of public transport connection via a safe pedestrian route by 2038, it was explained that:
  - Targets included in the strategy balanced national Government targets /Sustainability Standards against the ambition of residents /key partners as well what was achievable in line with district targets.
  - 99.1.% of residential dwellings within the district were within 500m radius of public transport options but this didn't include safe accessible routes.
  - 35.1% of residential properties in the district were in band C or above.
- The Panel acknowledged that the Strategy and headline targets had some academic basis alongside high level ambition but highlighted that it was important to set realistic targets for delivery to maintain accountability during arising challenges throughout the lifetime of the strategy (i.e.- fluctuating priorities and costs etc).
- The Panel welcomed the inclusion of elected members in the development of the strategy and recommended that engagement continued to be actioned during its delivery.
- In response to questions raised by the Panel around data collection, it was confirmed that monitoring and evaluation was a nationally agreed method for delivery and setting targets, and the approach was a fundamental element of translating the strategy to action.
- In relation to requests for clarity around the targets, it was agreed that:
  - The language used to be revisited and reassessed to ensure the information was accessible as a public facing document.
  - A definitions glossary be added to the close of the strategy to increase understanding and accessibility.

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- In relation to the Panel's concerns around targets to influence consumption it was acknowledged that:
  - There were actions that needed to be taken at both a local level and a national level to achieve change.
  - The focus in the strategy was on the areas where the Council could provide meaningful influence including providing education around consumer behaviour in relation to food waste.
  - It was noted that there was strong evidence to show that significant success could be had through behaviour change, however the Panel's concerns around setting high targets that were reliant on individual behaviour were noted and it was agreed to revisit this element as a part of reconsidering the deliverability of targets.
  - It was noted that local farm shops did not always provide local produce and could be significantly more expensive.
- In response to questions raised by the Panel around the target for '100% electric of fleet vehicles to be carbon neutral by 2038' it was explained that:
  - The target related specifically to Kirklees fleet vehicles in line with net zero targets, but partner businesses could also pledge to this ambition.
  - Infrastructure improvements were required which would be outlined in more detail in the forthcoming Fleet Replacement and EV strategies.
- In response to questions raised by the Panel around Tree Cover it was confirmed that this figure provided was in line with White Rose Forrest targets.
- In response to questions raised by the Panel around how planning laws may restrict delivery of some targets, it was explained that it was important to operate within national legal constraints, but local decision making could be influenced through the development of supplementary planning documents and other policies to support delivery.
- In response to a question from the Panel in relation to ensuring that underrepresented voices were included as part of the process, it was advised that there was an existing route for engagement, but a funding bid was in process and if successful could support further community outreach.
- In relation to the decision-making flight path and the next steps for reporting on delivery it was agreed that:
  - The Panel's recommendations and comments in relation to clarifying targets would be reflected upon and reshared with the Panel as an added step in the flightpath with the ambition of the document to be live by the summer 2024.
  - There be regular updates on progress and delivery of the Strategy to the Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Panel.

**RESOLVED:** The Panel noted the Environment Strategy: Everyday Life and recommended that:

1. It be made clear in the strategy that the projected cost of transition was a combination of public and private investment.
2. The reference to high inflation rates be revisited prior to Cabinet to ensure current information was included at the time of consideration.
3. It be referenced in the Strategy that reliance on fossil fuels increased vulnerability to national inflation pressures.
4. Elected members continued to be engaged in the delivery of the strategy.

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5. The language used in relation to actions and targets be reassessed to ensure the information was accessible as a public facing document.
6. A glossary setting out definitions of key terms and acronyms be included at the close of the strategy to increase accessibility.
7. The Panel's comments in relation to revisiting targets including (i) clarity of language (ii) influence and impact of individual behaviour change and (iii) scope for delivery be reflected upon and reshared with the Panel as an additional stage in the flightpath.
8. Regular updates on progress be provided to the Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Panel during delivery of the strategy.

### **9 Work Programme 2023/2024**

The Panel considered its Work Programme for the 2023/24 municipal year.

**RESOLVED:** The Panel noted the work programme, and it was agreed that an update in relation to operational issues of bin collections be requested for presentation in March.