

Contact Officer: Jenny Bryce-Chan

KIRKLEES COUNCIL

GROWTH AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY PANEL

Monday 23rd September 2024

Present: Councillor Zarina Amin (Chair)
Councillor Aziz Daji

In attendance: Cllr Graham Turner, Portfolio Holder for Finance and
Regeneration
Edward Highfield, Service Director, Skills and
Regeneration

Apologies: Councillor Bill Armer
Councillor Alison Munro
Councillor Harry McCarthy
Jonathan Milner (Co-Optee)
Chris Friend (Co-Optee)

1 Membership of the Panel

Apologies were received from Cllr Alison Munro, Cllr Bill Armer, Cllr Harry McCarthy, Chris Friend and Jonathan Milner.

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the Panel meeting held on the 12 August 2024, will be submitted for approval at the next panel meeting.

3 Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

4 Admission of the Public

All agenda items were considered in public.

5 Deputations/Petitions

No deputations or petitions were received.

6 Public Question Time

In accordance with Council Procedure rule 11, Mr Chas Ball, Secretary from Kirklees Cycling Campaign attended the meeting and asked a number of questions. Responses to the questions were provided by the Service Director for Skills and Regeneration.

7 Kirklees Major Transport Capital Schemes; Annual Report 2024

Edward Highfield, Service Director, Skills and Regeneration, provided an update on the Kirklees Major Transport Capital Schemes Annual Report for 2024. The Panel was advised that the aim is to bring an annual report through the democratic process. The annual report will look back in terms of what has been achieved and the progress and then looks forward for the next 12 months regarding what specific actions, delegations and decisions are needed to keep the transport programme moving. An approach like this is welcomed and is warranted given the scale of the programme.

This was undertaken last year; however, a lot of the focus last year was on the inflation review and particular effort on phasing the Cooper Bridge Programme which took up 90% of the attention last year. This year, the hope is that it will be business as usual. The appended report aims to set out what the key projects are, recognising that this is not the totality of the highways capital programme, this is just the transport infrastructure projects which are largely funded through the West Yorkshire Combined Authority. The report also sets out what those projects are and their current status. Some are delivered and completed and are being evaluated, some are currently on site and are being delivered, and some projects have planning permission and a contractor lined up and ready to go, and some are further out in time.

Some have been pipelined which means they are still a priority and there is an ambition to deliver them, however, at this moment in time there is no funding associated with the project. They are on the 'shelf' and while it is disappointing they are not being delivered, when funding does become available, the intention is to match pipeline projects to whatever funding opportunity comes along. There are a set of known projects either at concept or outline business case stage which will enable these projects to be matched to the requirements of funders which will stand the council in good stead for the future.

RESOLVED:

That Edward Highfield be thanked for providing an update on Kirklees Major Transport Capital Schemes, Annual Report 2024.

8 Our Cultural Heart

Cllr Graham Turner, Cabinet Member for Finance and Regeneration, introduced the item advising the Panel that looking around Huddersfield town centre there is a great deal of work on demolition being undertaken. Initially the work was inside therefore it was not visible, however it is now possible to physically see boots on the ground working to deliver the vision for Huddersfield.

Edward Highfield, Service Director, Skills and Regeneration, presented an update on the Our Cultural Heart development. Referring to the presentation slides, the Panel was provided with a summary of progress so far, a reminder in terms of the masterplan, an update on the phasing and progress in relation to phases one and two and beyond.

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In summary, the Panel was reminded that the Huddersfield Blueprint, was launched in June 2019, with the aim of transforming the town centre. Cultural Heart is one of the six target areas and is not the entirety of the blueprint, but delivery of the Cultural Heart is the big standout flagship initiative within the blueprint. The blueprint sits under the priority of the Corporate Plan, to continue to invest in the towns and villages as a recognition of the economic future of Kirklees and the importance of the town centres despite the challenges being faced in local government. It is therefore important to remain ambitious, and talk about the economy as much as possible and what is going to generate future opportunities for residents and also the tax base of council, to ensure a strong alignment between this agenda and the council's Corporate Plan.

The Panel was informed that the overall construction budget for Cultural Heart is included within the council's Capital Plan, and while it may seem like a big number, it is over a period of time. This is not additional funding it is planned into the budget cycle over a long period of time.

In terms of construction, whilst the buildings are important, it is what happens inside the buildings that really matters, that is what people experience and the quality that it needs to offer. As work is being undertaken on the construction side, work is also being undertaken with council services to prepare the pre-opening and the opening and operation of the individual services.

To give some assurance, there is a Town Centre Operations Management Board, which co-ordinates the integration of the decision making of those individual services in terms of wider governance. The Cultural Heart project reports to the programme board internally, to an officer led programme board on a monthly basis, and also reports through to Cllr Turner, Portfolio holder for Regeneration.

The Panel was informed that progress is reviewed regularly by Cabinet through the gateway process. Going through the concept, the outline design, the more detailed design, and actual decision to proceed or not, is a Cabinet decision and this is done on a staged process through what is called gateways.

Phase one, has been through the contract award, and is on site delivering, and future reports will be brought through regarding phase two and beyond, using the same logical set of gateways to ensure that Cabinet is making the decisions. The next cabinet report is targeted to be towards the end of this calendar year and that will focus on Phase two. In between Cabinet dates, it has been helpful to come to scrutiny on a regular basis, with the last update being presented to scrutiny in November 2023.

David Glover, Senior Responsible Officer, in conjunction with Cllr Turner usually brings an item to scrutiny that looks back in terms of reporting on progress and looks forward in terms of decisions, and that gives members the opportunity to look into the programme in more detail, and offer challenge, comments and questions. The information being presented today is part of that regular sequence of events that is now well established.

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Referring to the presentation slides, Mr Highfield advised that although the detail, the timing and the phasing may flex, the overall masterplan is as the title suggests. It represents a significant part of the town centre and is broken down into different services and different offers such as the library, the food hall and the museum and gallery on what is called the Queen Street Plot. The final phase is the venue and multi-storey car park, surrounded by a public realm and a public park. The aim is to give a better quality and a new offer for people to come into the town centre and spend more time in the town centre and hopefully do other things while they are in town, it is well-established and embedded masterplan.

The Panel was informed that one of the big changes of recent times was to move to a phased approach. Rather than do this in one go, and the financial parameters of the council did not allow that, the last report to Cabinet focused on the principles of phasing.

Phase one – includes the library the food hall and the event square.

Phase two will be outlined in a report to Cabinet later in the year and will include the museum and gallery and the area around the building.

Phase three – will be the Queens Street Plot.

Phase four - will be the park.

Phase five – will be the venue and multi-storey car park.

A major benefit of phasing is that it allows the council to be more opportunistic and more responsive to any changes in the market. While these are the phases, and the aim is to step through them logically, there is an opportunity to move things around if that is deemed the best thing to do. Another important factor to consider is that when talking about phases it focuses on things that are above the ground, however there are some extensive basements under all these sites, with the exception of phase five.

The Panel was presented with information which outlined the timeline for phase one of the project. The Panel was informed that is important to have an ambitious social value strategy for cultural heart and wanted the cultural heart project to be best practice to be the best around social value. The aim is to demonstrate how it can be possible to extract social value outcomes through the contract and through working with the private sector and their supply chain. The intention is to make it an exemplar of social value and to date that is going well.

The Panel was provided with further details and the timeline for phase one of the project as follows:

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| March 24 | Enabling works instructed under Pre-Construction Services Agreement (PCSA). There was an issue identified during the PCSA period relating to asset related structural works which identified significant failings in some concrete slabs which will need replacing |
| June 24 | Planning/LBC revisions approved |
| Aug 24 | Main contract commenced, construction compound on old car park plot, contractor SV deliver begins |

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Q4 25 Food hall operator appointment

April 26 Construction completion (Gateway 5)

Summer 26 Facilities operational

The Panel was provided with further details and the timeline for phase two which related to the museum and gallery, the public realm around it, and the significant basements underneath. The Panel was advised that, this is further behind because it is still in the development phase.

The Panel was informed that planning and listed building consent for the whole of the masterplan was approved in March 2023. There is coherence to the overall planning strategy and to the overall masterplan. In relation to the Queen Street plot, there were initial talks with Greenhead College about a potential expansion plot for the college, focused around science and technology, however, the college has subsequently withdrawn their interest in that plot. Alternatives for the plot is being sought.

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

- Can you please provide further detail on the social value strategy?
- When visits are made to schools, do you ask what proportion of the students are from deprived areas and from BME backgrounds?
- Referring to phase one in relation to the failure in the concrete slabs, has that resulted in any additional costs above what the budget required?

RESOLVED:

That Cllr Graham Turner and Edward Highfield be thanked for providing an update on Our Cultural Heart.