

Public Document Pack



**Service Director – Legal, Governance and
Commissioning**

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Monday 31 March 2025

Notice of Meeting

Dear Member

Cabinet

The **Cabinet** will meet in the **Council Chamber - Town Hall, Huddersfield** at **1.30 pm** on **Tuesday 8 April 2025**.

This meeting will be live webcast. To access the webcast please go to the Council's website at the time of the meeting and follow the instructions on the page.

The items which will be discussed are described in the agenda and there are reports attached which give more details.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "S Lawton".

Samantha Lawton

Service Director – Legal, Governance and Commissioning

Kirklees Council advocates openness and transparency as part of its democratic processes. Anyone wishing to record (film or audio) the public parts of the meeting should inform the Chair/Clerk of their intentions prior to the meeting.

The Cabinet members are:-

Member	Responsible For:
Councillor Carole Pattison	Leader of the Council
Councillor Moses Crook	Deputy Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member - Transport and Housing
Councillor Beverley Addy	Cabinet Member - Adult Social Care and Health
Councillor Munir Ahmed	Cabinet Member - Environment and Highways
Councillor Tyler Hawkins	Cabinet Member - Corporate
Councillor Viv Kendrick	Cabinet Member - Children' Services (Statutory Responsibility for Children)
Councillor Amanda Pinnock	Cabinet Member - Education and Communities
Councillor Graham Turner	Cabinet Member - Finance and Regeneration

Agenda

Reports or Explanatory Notes Attached

Pages

1: Membership of Cabinet

To receive apologies for absence from Cabinet Members who are unable to attend this meeting.

2: Minutes of Previous Meeting

1 - 4

To approve the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on 11 March 2025.

3: Declaration of Interests

5 - 6

Members will be asked to say if there are any items on the Agenda in which they have any disclosable pecuniary interests or any other interests, which may prevent them from participating in any discussion of the items or participating in any vote upon the items.

4: Admission of the Public

Most agenda items take place in public. This only changes where there is a need to consider exempt information, as contained at Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. You will be informed at this point which items are to be recommended for exclusion and to be resolved by the Committee.

5: Deputations/Petitions

The Cabinet will receive any petitions and/or deputations from members of the public. A deputation is where up to five people can attend the meeting and make a presentation on some particular issue of concern. A member of the public can also submit a petition at the meeting relating to a matter on which the body has powers and responsibilities.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 10, Members of the Public must submit a deputation in writing, at least three clear working days in advance of the meeting and shall subsequently be notified if the deputation shall be heard. A maximum of four deputations shall be heard at any one meeting.

6: Questions by Members of the Public

To receive any public questions.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11, the period for the asking and answering of public questions shall not exceed 15 minutes.

Any questions must be submitted in writing at least three clear working days in advance of the meeting.

7: Questions by Elected Members (Oral Questions)

Cabinet will receive any questions from Elected Members.

In accordance with Executive Procedure Rule 2.3 (2.3.1.6) a period of up to 30 minutes will be allocated.

8: Public Space Protection Orders

7 - 16

To consider a revision of the Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO), along with the introduction of a new PSPO.

Wards affected: all

Contact: Neil Sidhu, Complex Enforcement Manager, Public Protection

9: LGA (Local Government Association) Corporate Peer Challenge - Kirklees Council Action Plan (Reference to Council)

17 - 66

To consider the Kirklees Council Action Plan following the Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge.

Wards affected: all

Contact: Stephen Bonnell, Head of Policy, Partnerships and
Corporate Planning

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Contact Officer: Yolande Myers

KIRKLEES COUNCIL

CABINET

Tuesday 11th March 2025

Present: Councillor Carole Pattison (Chair)
Councillor Moses Crook
Councillor Beverley Addy
Councillor Munir Ahmed
Councillor Tyler Hawkins
Councillor Amanda Pinnock
Councillor Graham Turner

Apologies: Councillor Viv Kendrick

105 Membership of Cabinet

Apologies were received on behalf of Councillor Viv Kendrick.

106 Minutes of Previous Meetings

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 11 February 2025 be approved as a correct record.

107 Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

108 Admission of the Public

It was noted that all items would be considered in public session.

109 Deputations/Petitions

No deputations or petitions were received.

110 Questions by Members of the Public

No questions were received.

111 Questions by Elected Members (Oral Questions)

No questions were asked.

112 Corporate Financial Monitoring Report Quarter 3 2024-25

Cabinet considered a report which set out financial monitoring information for General Fund Revenue, Housing Revenue Account and Capital Plan, as at Quarter 3 (month 9), 2024/25.

The report advised that the forecast outturn position at Quarter 3 was an overspend of £13.0m after which the use of earmarked reserves and contingencies reduced to £9.9m. Within the £13m, an estimated £9m was due to slippage in the approved savings programme across the Council.

In line with Financial Procedure Rules, the S151 Officer would undertake a review of all balances, earmarked reserves, grant reserves and consider whether some of those could be brought into revenue as they were no longer needed or there were no immediate plans for their use.

The report provided a breakdown of the projected outturn financial monitoring position in terms of (i) forecast general fund revenue outturn position in 2024/25 by service area (ii) general fund reserves and balances movements in year (iii) forecast Housing Revenue Account outturn position including movements in the Housing Revenue Account reserves in-year (iv) forecast capital outturn position in 2024/2025 and (v) treasury management prudential indicators.

RESOLVED –

- 1) That the forecast revenue outturn position at Quarter 3 for 2024/25 (£9.9m overspend) be noted.
- 2) That in line with Financial Procedure Rules the Service Director - Finance would undertake a review of all balances and earmarked reserves to fund any remaining overspend.
- 3) That authority be given to the wrap around school hours (8am to 6pm) child care for primary school aged pupils funding, and that the proposed allocation method be noted.
- 4) That it be noted the Quarter 3 DSG deficit was forecast to increase by £20.6m in 2024/25.
- 5) That the Quarter 3 forecast HRA position as breakeven and forecast year-end reserves position of £21m be noted.
- 6) That the Quarter 3 forecast capital monitoring position for 2024/25 be noted, and that approval be given to a further net reduction in the 2024/25 position of £33.3m due to £36.4m re-profiling (£30.4m General Fund and £6m HRA) into future years.
- 7) That approval be given to the £3.5m net increase in the overall capital plan (£3.1m 2024/25, £0.4m 2025/26) due to increased grant.
- 8) That the Quarter 3 treasury management prudential indicators be noted.

113 Q3 2024/25 Council Plan and Performance Update Report

Cabinet considered a report which provided an update on performance against the 2024/25 Council Plan deliverables contributing to the Kirklees Shared Outcomes and the Council's aspiration to be effective and efficient in the delivery of its services.

Cabinet noted that throughout 2024/25, the Council Key Measures had been continuously reviewed to ensure that they reflected and represented the most critical and important areas of the council.

The report advised that updates would continue to be presented on a quarterly basis which would enable Executive Directors, the Chief Executive and Members of Cabinet to monitor progress against key priorities and enact change where needed.

RESOLVED – That the Q3 2024/25 Council Plan and Performance Update Report be noted.

114 Corporate Risk - Quarterly Report 3 2024/25

Cabinet received the Corporate Risk Quarterly Report (3) 2024/2025 which provided information about an assessment of risks faced by the Council at a significant corporate level.

The report highlighted the importance of having effective risk management arrangements as part of a strong assurance and governance framework and that identifying current and potential future controls played a key role in that.

The report advised that, during the quarter, no new risks had been raised, no risks had been removed, no increases to risk scores and there was one reduction in risk score. It was noted that there would be continual monitoring and reporting through the Council's governance and management processes.

RESOLVED – That the Corporate Risk Quarter 3 2024/25 report be noted.

115 Vulnerable Tenant Policy

Cabinet considered a report setting out the Homes and Neighbourhoods Vulnerable Tenant Policy, which ensured the Council's commitment to try and ensure that vulnerable tenants with support needs were not disadvantaged when accessing housing-related support.

The report advised that the Vulnerable Tenant Policy was essential to ensure that social housing was inclusive, supportive, and responsive to the needs of all tenants, particularly those who were most at risk. The policy aimed to support staff in making informed decisions when supporting vulnerable tenants and household members. This underlined the Council's commitment to being a responsible social landlord in assisting vulnerable tenants in accessing housing related services and in sustaining their tenancies and homes.

RESOLVED – That the Homes and Neighbourhood Vulnerable Tenant Policy be adopted.

116 Anti-Social Behaviour Policy (Incorporating Hate Crime and noise nuisance)

Cabinet considered a report which sought approval for the Homes and Neighbourhoods Antisocial Behaviour (ASB) Policy. Cabinet noted that the policy incorporated hate crime and noise nuisance.

The report advised that Homes and Neighbourhoods strived to improve services for tenants and residents and the approach to ASB needed strengthening to improve satisfaction with ASB services.

Cabinet noted that the new policy had considered reports from the Housing Ombudsman Services along with reports in 2019 and 2024 by Baroness Newlove which provided an understanding of the lived experiences of victims of antisocial behaviour.

RESOLVED – That the Homes and Neighbourhoods Antisocial Behaviour Policy (incorporating hate crime and noise nuisance) be adopted.

117

Domestic Abuse Policy

Cabinet considered a report which sought approval for the updated Homes and Neighbourhoods Domestic Abuse Policy.

The report advised that the Domestic Abuse Policy complemented the Vulnerable Tenant and ASB Policies, and by working together the policies helped to identify and address issues early, preventing escalation and ensuring tenants well-being. The policies provided a robust and interconnected support system that enhanced tenant safety, well-being, and community cohesion.

Cabinet noted that the updated Domestic Abuse Policy had several important implications for the community and individuals (i) Increased Awareness, encouraging tenants and staff to recognise the signs and understand the resources available (ii) Support for Victims, providing a clear framework for the support and (iii) Empowerment, by giving tenants the knowledge and resources to seek help and report incidents without fear of stigma or retaliation.

RESOLVED – That the revised Homes and Neighbourhoods Domestic Abuse Policy be adopted.

KIRKLEES COUNCIL			
COUNCIL/CABINET/COMMITTEE MEETINGS ETC			
DECLARATION OF INTERESTS			
Name of Councillor			
Item in which you have an interest	Type of interest (eg a disclosable pecuniary interest or an "Other Interest")	Does the nature of the interest require you to withdraw from the meeting while the item in which you have an interest is under consideration? [Y/N]	Brief description of your interest

Signed: Dated:

NOTES

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

If you have any of the following pecuniary interests, they are your disclosable pecuniary interests under the new national rules. Any reference to spouse or civil partner includes any person with whom you are living as husband or wife, or as if they were your civil partner.

Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain, which you, or your spouse or civil partner, undertakes.

Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from your council or authority) made or provided within the relevant period in respect of any expenses incurred by you in carrying out duties as a member, or towards your election expenses.

Any contract which is made between you, or your spouse or your civil partner (or a body in which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, has a beneficial interest) and your council or authority -

- under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and
- which has not been fully discharged.

Any beneficial interest in land which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, have and which is within the area of your council or authority.

Any licence (alone or jointly with others) which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, holds to occupy land in the area of your council or authority for a month or longer.

Any tenancy where (to your knowledge) - the landlord is your council or authority; and the tenant is a body in which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, has a beneficial interest.

Any beneficial interest which you, or your spouse or your civil partner has in securities of a body where -

- (a) that body (to your knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of your council or authority; and
- (b) either -

the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or

if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.



REPORT TITLE: Public Space Protection Orders

Meeting:	Cabinet
Date:	9th April 2025
Cabinet Member (if applicable)	Councillor Munir Ahmed
Key Decision Eligible for Call In	Yes Yes
<p>Purpose of Report</p> <p>The purpose of this report is to update Cabinet members of a revision to the Council’s Public Space Protection Orders (‘PSPO’) and the introduction of new PSPO’s,</p>	
<p>Recommendations</p> <p>It is recommended that the Cabinet agree to adopt the new and revised PSPO’s as presented at appendix 1 and appendix 2.</p> <p>Reasons for Recommendations</p> <p>Revising and strengthening the Council’s PSPO’s will introduce greater flexibility in how the Council and its partners address the changing nature of ASB within the district. In addition, opening the evidence gathering to external partners and all council staff will increase the Council’s capacity to educate and take the appropriate action where necessary.</p>	
<p>Resource Implications:</p> <p>Resources from Greenspace Action Team to install signage, this will be undertaken as part of their normal duties.</p> <p>Currently the Council employs 2 PSPO Officers, who cover the whole of Kirklees. We proposed that we work alongside our Huddersfield Bid and West Yorkshire Police colleagues to gather evidence in order for the Council to take the appropriate action which will consist of a graduated response with education being the first step leading on to potential enforcement action such as fixed penalty notices.</p>	
<p>Date signed off by <u>Executive Director</u> & name</p> <p>Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Finance?</p> <p>Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Legal and Commissioning (Monitoring Officer)?</p>	<p>27th March 2025 David Sheppard</p> <p>27th March 2025 Kevin Mulvany</p> <p>28th March 2025 Samantha Lawton</p>

Electoral wards affected: All

Ward councillors consulted: Yes via Neighbourhood Platform and Email

Public or private: Public

Has GDPR been considered?

1. Executive Summary

The proposals set out in this report outline changes to the Councils existing PSPO's and introduction of new PSPO's to strengthen the Council position in relation to education and enforcement of PSPO's.

2. Information required to take a decision

2.1 Introduced by the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, PSPO's sit amongst a range of powers designed to address anti-social behaviour (ASB) locally and provide the Council with ability to address persistent issues that are detrimental to the wider community. They are aimed at ensuring public spaces can be enjoyed by everybody and be free from ASB.

Current PSPO's

2.2 The Council's current PSPO's were initially adopted in April 2017 They were subject to a review that commenced in 2022 and following that review they were renewed without change in 2023.

2.3 The current PSPO's cover the following activities and areas of the district

PSPO Description	Areas Covered
Fouling of land by dogs	Boroughwide
Control of fires and barbeques	Council Land, National Trust Land, Yorkshire Water Land
Control of sky lanterns, fireworks and balloons including helium balloons	Footpaths and Castle Hill Nature Reserve
Dogs – Means of picking up dog faeces	Footpaths and Castle hill Nature Reserve
Dogs on leads by direction	Wilton, Beaumont, Greenhead, Crow Nest and Ravenknowle Parks
Dogs exclusion	Boroughwide in Play Areas, Games areas, skate parks
Public urination and defecation	Batley, Dewsbury, Huddersfield, Marsden and Slaithwaite Real Ale Trail
Street drinking	Batley, Dewsbury, Huddersfield, Marsden and Slaithwaite Real Ale Trail

Proposed Changes

2.4 After reviewing the evidence from internal statistics with the council, West Yorkshire Police and Huddersfield Bid, meetings with partners both internally and externally, it is proposed to create a single new PSPO for Batley, Dewsbury, Holmfirth, Huddersfield, Ravensthorpe Town Centres addressing, amongst other, the following issues –

- Street Drinking

While the current Street Drinking PSPO goes some way to address the ASB issues linked with on street drinking, the current phrasing of this PSPO means an officer has to prove the drinking ‘has had’ or ‘is likely to have’ a detrimental effect on the quality of life.

The shifting nature of issues within town centres means it is not always possible for officers prove the effect of on street drinking, it is therefore proposed to reword the existing PSPO to remove the need to prove a ‘detrimental effect’ and move to a PSPO that covers being in possession of ‘an open vessel containing, or pertaining to contain, alcohol’. Moving to this style of PSPO’s would provide officers with greater flexibility to address more ASB issues linked with on street drinking.

- Bird Feeding

Feeding of birds, in particular pigeons, is an emerging issue with the town centres, which is leading to more calls for service to the Council’s Pest Control team.

Introducing a PSPO that prevents bird feeding will, via education of the public in the first instance, enable officers to take relevant enforcement action where education proves unsuccessful.

- Loitering, Nuisance Behaviour and Temporary Structures

Currently the Council does not have a PSPO to cover loitering, nuisance behaviour, or ASB associated with having structures such as tents within the town centres.

Given the housing crisis, this is an emerging issue within Kirklees and is becoming more prevalent as other local authorities across West and South Yorkshire and Greater Manchester put in place PSPO’s to cover this activity.

Introducing this PSPO will provide officers the flexibility to address this issue, with education and support being a key part of this. In addition, it will bring Kirklees in line with other local authorities within the region.

2.5 A copy of the proposed town centre PSPO can be found at **appendix 1**

2.6 In addition to the proposed standard town centre PSPO, a borough wide PSPO is proposed to address the issue of nuisance vehicles.

2.7 ASB linked to nuisance vehicles, particularly anti-social use of motorbikes, is an emerging issue. Introducing a PSPO to tackle this issue will provide West Yorkshire Police greater powers to gather evidence and issue fixed penalty notices on persistent offenders.

2.8 A copy of the proposed nuisance vehicle PSPO can be found at **appendix 2**

Approach

2.9 In line with the Council's corporate enforcement policy there will be a graduated response to reports / evidence of breaches of the PSPO's; with education as the initial course of action playing a key role in this. In line with the corporate enforcement policy any formal action will be reserved for more serious and / or persistent breaches and where education has proved unsuccessful.

Partners – Evidence Gathering

2.10 As part of the revised PSPO's it is proposed that Huddersfield Bid, along with West Yorkshire Police, with Council staff to gather evidence and information of potential breaches of the PSPO's and provide a more proactive approach to education and enforcement.

Partnering Agencies / Internal Teams

2.11 The Council has held meetings with partner agencies and Safer Kirklees, Greenspace Action Team and West Yorkshire Police. Following those meetings, West Yorkshire Police, along with the afore-mentioned internal teams, support the revised PSPO's and the introduction of the additional PSPO's and have agreed in principle to their officers information gathering, which will then be passed to be reviewed by the appropriate officers.

Signage

2.12 Where a local authority introduces a PSPO there is a legal requirement to place sufficient signage at, or adjacent to, the area affected by the PSPO.

Existing PSPO's

2.13 The following existing PSPO's, not amended by the proposed changes, will remain in place.

- Control of fires and barbeques
- Control of sky lanterns, fireworks and balloons, including helium balloons
- Dog Fouling, Dog- means of picking up faeces and Dog Exclusions – no change to the wording, but amalgamated into one PSPO

3. Implications for the Council

3.1 Council Plan

The proposed PSPO's support the Council's 24 / 25 Corporate Plan and shared outcomes by ensuring the Council's PSPO's are effective in their application and promote positive outcomes for our residents and support the regeneration of our town centres.

3.2 Financial Implications

The financial implications remain unchanged, The Council currently employs two PSPO Officers and this remains the same.
The cost of signage is anticipated to be circa £5000, there are no more anticipated costs.

3.3 Legal Implications

The power to introduce PSPO's are contained with the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, and the requirement to advertise their creation is contained with the regulation made under the Act (The Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 (Publication of Public Spaces Protection Orders) Regulations 2014).

Councils can use PSPOs to prohibit specified activities, and/or require certain things to be done by people engaged in particular activities, within a defined public area. PSPOs differ from other tools introduced under the Act as they are council-led, and rather than targeting specific individuals or properties, they focus on the identified problem behaviour in a specific location. The legislation provides for restrictions to be placed on behaviour that apply to everyone in that locality (with the possible use of exemptions). Breach of a PSPO without a reasonable excuse is an offence.

Powers to create PSPOs came into force in October 2014. As well as enabling local authorities to address a range of different issues, the Orders replaced Designated Public Place Orders (DPPOs), Gating Orders and Dog Control Orders. Existing DPPOs, Gating Orders and Dog Control Orders which automatically become PSPOs (as of 20 October 2017).

3.8 Other (eg Risk, Integrated Impact Assessment or Human Resources)

IIA

An IIA has been completed as part of the development of the proposed PSPO's, this has not highlighted any equality issues. [PSPO - Integrated Impact Assessment](#)

HR

There are no apparent HR issues with the proposed PSPO's,

4 Consultation

4.1 In line with the requirements of the legislation, public consultation took place between 9 July 2024 to the 6 August 2024 via an online survey accessed through the Council's Website. The consultation received 371 Responses, with the majority of the responses being in favour of more enforcement and tougher sanctions, across all areas of the PSPO's

4.2 In relation to new PSPO's around Nuisance Vehicles 88 percent of respondents wanted the PSPO.

- Begging: The majority of respondents (84%) felt that the issue of begging had either stayed the same or got worse over the past 3 years.
- Loitering: The majority of respondents (81%) felt that the issue of loitering had either stayed the same or got worse over the past 3 years.

- Street drinking: The majority of respondents (75%) felt that the issue of street drinking had either stayed the same or got worse over the past 3 years.
- Public urination / defecation: The majority of respondents (53%) felt that the issue of Public urination / defecation had either stayed the same or got worse over the past 3 years.
- Feeding birds or vermin: The majority of respondents (59%) felt that the issue of Bird Feeding had either stayed the same or got worse over the past 3 years.
- Erecting temporary structures without land owners permission: The majority of respondents (65%) answered 'I don't know / this doesn't affect me' regarding this issue

5. Engagement

- 5.1 In developing the proposed PSPO's pre-consultation engagement took place with, Greenspace Action Team, Kirklees Rough Sleeper Team, Huddersfield Bid, Safer Kirklees and West Yorkshire Police.
- 5.2 Engagement with vulnerable persons likely to be affected by the implemented PSPO's has been conducted with officers visiting food banks, missions and various hot spots across the authority. Officers working with the centres and problem areas have been signposting persons to various charities and council departments to try and resolve any issues they may have.

Officers have also been on a monthly schedule visiting problem areas with partners such as Rough Sleepers Team, Hope for Justice, Safer Kirklees and also Change Grow Live to support persons of interest.

Officers will still conduct the support visits in order to ensure that the PSPO's are not affecting the most vulnerable persons in society.

- 5.3 Following feedback from Scrutiny Panel, A grace period will be given and an educational process will start advising members of the public of the PSPO's along with new signage and a press release along with visits to Missions and foodbanks.

6 Options

6.1 Options considered

Options considered were to not review the existing PSPO and continue to work with internal teams and external partners to address ASB issues using existing powers and existing PSPO's. The main reason this option was rejected was due to feedback from engagement with partners that some of the current PSPO's are not sufficient to address the changing nature of ASB within the district, and did not provide sufficient flexibility to address issues.

6.2 Reasons for recommended option

Revising and strengthening the Council's PSPO's will introduce greater flexibility in how the Council and its partners address the changing nature of ASB within the district. In addition, opening the evidence gathering to external partners and all council staff will

increase the Council's capacity to educate and take the appropriate action where necessary.

7 Next steps and timelines

7.1 For Cabinet to consider the proposal at its meeting on the 9th April 2025.

8 Contact officer

Neil Sidhu
Complex Enforcement Manager
Public Protection

9 Background Papers and History of Decisions

Officer Delegated Decision – Adoption of 2023 reviewed PSPO's - [Decision - Public Space Protection Order Review Decision | Kirklees Council](#)

20th November 2024 – Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee - [Agenda for Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Panel on Wednesday 20th November 2024, 2.00 pm | Kirklees Council](#)

10 Appendices

Appendix 1 Proposed Town Centre PSPO

Appendix 2 Proposed Borough Wide Nuisance Vehicle PSPO

11 Service Director responsible

Katherine Armitage
Service Director
Environmental Strategy & Climate Change

The Council of the Borough of Kirklees
Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014, Section 59
Public Space Protection Order (Huddersfield Town Centre)

This order is made by the Council of the Borough of Kirklees (“the Council”) and shall be known as the {insert town centre} Town Centre Public Space Protection Order (“this Order”)

1. This Order shall come into operation on XXXXXDATE and shall have effect for 3 years thereafter, unless extended by further order as set out in the Act.
2. The Council is satisfied that the conditions set out in Section 59 (2) of the Act have been met. Namely that activities carried out in a public place within the authority’s area have had or it is likely that they will have a detrimental effect on the quality of life of those in the locality.
3. The Council is also satisfied that the conditions set out in Section 59 (3) of the Act have been met. Namely, that the effect or likely effect of the activities is, or is likely to be, of a persistent or continuing nature and that these activities are unreasonable and justify the restrictions imposed by the Order and that it is in all the circumstances expedient to make this Order for the purpose of reducing crime and/or anti-social behaviour in a public place.
4. The Outlined Plan marked in red applies to all the orders below,

The Order

Prohibitions	Requirements	Area Affected
Begging	No person shall make any verbal, non-verbal or written request for money, donations or goods, including the placing of hats, clothing or containers so as to cause or be likely to cause harassment, alarm, distress, nuisance, or annoyance	Within Huddersfield Town Centre
Loitering	No person shall loiter, sit or lay on the floor or on temporary structures in or adjacent to doorways or around pay machines (including banks, supermarkets) in a manner causing or likely to cause harassment,	Within Huddersfield Town Centre

	alarm, distress, nuisance or annoyance to any person within the Town Centre.	
No return within a 24 hour period	No person shall, after being requested to leave the area by an authorised officer due to them behaving in a manner causing or likely to cause harassment, alarm, distress, nuisance or annoyance to any person within the Town Centre without reasonable excuse, remain in or return to the Town Centre within a period of 24 hours.	Within Huddersfield Town Centre
Street Drinking	No person shall consume alcohol in any public place in the Town Centre other than at licensed premises or shall be in possession of any opened vessel containing or appearing to contain alcohol in any public place save for those places identified by Section 62 of the Act	Within Huddersfield Town Centre
No urinating or defecating in public places	No person shall urinate or defecate in any public place; this does not include public toilets.	Within Huddersfield Town Centre
No Feeding of Birds and / or Vermin	No Person shall feed the birds or vermin	Within Huddersfield Town Centre
No Temporary Structures without the Landowners Permission	No Person shall erect temporary structures in any public place within the Town Centre	Within Huddersfield Town Centre

The Council of the Borough of Kirklees
Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014, Section 59
Public Space Protection Order (Nuisance Vehicles)

This order is made by the Council of the Borough of Kirklees (“the Council”) and shall be known as Nuisance Vehicles Public Space Protection Order (“this Order”)

1. This Order shall come into operation on **XXXXXDATE** and shall have an effect for 3 years thereafter, unless extended by further order as set out in the Act.
2. The Council is satisfied that the conditions set out in Section 59 (2) of the Act have been met. Namely that activities carried out in a public place within the authority’s area have had or it is likely that they will have a detrimental effect on the quality of life of those in the locality.
3. The Council is also satisfied that the conditions set out in Section 59 (3) of the Act have been met. Namely, that the effect or likely effect of the activities is, or is likely to be, of a persistent or continuing nature and that these activities are unreasonable and justify the restrictions imposed by the Order and that it is all the circumstances expedient to make this Order for the purpose of reducing crime and/or anti-social behaviour in a public place.
4. The Outlined Plan marked in red applies to all the orders below,

The Order

Prohibitions	Requirements	Area Affected
Performing Stunts	Performing stunts using a motorised vehicle, (including but not limited to performing doughnuts, drifting, skidding, handbrake turns and wheeling) on the highway, i Including Public Rights of Way is prohibited Causing danger or risk of injury to road users including pedestrians is prohibited	Kirklees Wide
Cat Calling from motorised vehicles	Shouting, or unsolicited sexualised or offensive comments or gestures, such as cat calling from vehicles is prohibited	Kirklees Wide



**Report title:
Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge – Kirklees Council Action Plan**

Meeting	Cabinet
Date	8 April 2025
Cabinet Member (if applicable)	Cllr Carole Pattison, Leader of the Council
Key Decision Eligible for Call In	Yes Yes

Purpose of Report

The Local Government Association (LGA) came to Kirklees Council in November 2024 to carry out a ‘Corporate Peer Challenge’, which is a key part of the LGA’s improvement and assurance framework. The LGA produced a report, which outlines feedback following the visit. The report contains eight key recommendations for action and improvement. This report is available to read on the council’s website here: [LGA \(Local Government Association\) Corporate Peer Challenge | Kirklees Council](#), and is appended to this paper for context at **Appendix B**.

This Cabinet report presents an action plan for approval. The action plan aims to deliver a range of corporate, and service led improvements in response to the key recommendations provided by the LGA, and is provided at **Appendix A**.

Recommendations

- For Cabinet to note the LGA’s report, provided for context at **Appendix B**.
- For Cabinet to consider the contents of this report and approve the action plan as presented in **Appendix A**.
- For Cabinet to consider and approve the proposals for ongoing reporting against the action plan, taking into consideration any feedback provided by OSMC on the 4 April, provided in **section 2.8** of this report.
- For Cabinet to agree to present the action plan to **Council on 23 April 2025** for noting, so that Members are aware of the LGA’s recommendations, and the associated actions the council will be taking in response.

Reasons for Recommendations

- Kirklees Council is a member council of the LGA. The LGA require all member councils to undertake a ‘Corporate Peer Challenge’ at least once every five years.
- As part of the Corporate Peer Challenge process, councils are required to develop and publish an action plan to deliver improvements based upon the recommendations provided by the LGA following the visit. Following the November 2024 visit to Kirklees, we are required to publish an action plan by the 29 April 2025.
- The action plan sets out some important next steps for the council and builds on recent work to improve and strengthen our position for delivering on our priorities into the future. It will support the council to deliver on the priorities set out within the refreshed 2025/26 Council Plan, which was agreed by Council on the 5 March 2025.

Resource Implication: The action plan will mostly be delivered with resources already existing within the council. Where additional/external resources are required to deliver specific actions within the plan, relevant council process and procedure rules will be followed, with value for money clearly demonstrated.

Date signed off by Executive Director & name

Rachel Spencer-Henshall – Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director for Public Health and Corporate Resources
28.03.2025

Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Finance?

Kevin Mulvaney
28.03.2025

Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Legal and Commissioning (Monitoring Officer)?

Samantha Lawton
28.03.2025

Electoral wards affected: All

Ward councillors consulted: Not applicable

Public or private: Public

Has GDPR been considered? No personal data is included in this report.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Local Government Association (LGA) came to Kirklees Council between 26 - 29 November 2024, to carry out a 'Corporate Peer Challenge'. The Corporate Peer Challenge is a key part of the LGA's improvement and assurance framework.
- 1.2 The LGA requires every member council to undertake a Corporate Peer Challenge at least once every five years. During the visit, local government peers provided feedback to the council on a range of corporate issues, based on evidence and information provided to them, and conversations that took place with a range of staff, councillors, partners and other key stakeholders.
- 1.3 The LGA have produced a report, which outlines feedback following the visit, and contains eight key recommendations for improvement. This report is available to read on the Council's website here: [LGA \(Local Government Association\) Corporate Peer Challenge | Kirklees Council](#), and is appended to this paper for context at **Appendix B**.
- 1.4 This report presents an action plan to Cabinet, which aims to deliver a range of corporate, and service led improvements in response to the key recommendations provided by the LGA. This action plan is provided at **Appendix A**.
- 1.5 The action plan sets out some important next steps for the council and builds on recent work to improve and strengthen our position for delivering on our priorities into the future. It will support the council to deliver on the priorities set out within the refreshed 2025/26 Council Plan, which was agreed by Council on the 5 March 2025.

2. Information required to take a decision

2.1 Background

- 2.1.1 The Local Government Association (LGA) came to Kirklees Council between 26 - 29 November 2024, to carry out a 'Corporate Peer Challenge'.
- 2.1.2 The Corporate Peer Challenge is a key part of the LGA's improvement and assurance framework. As described by the LGA, the process provides "robust, strategic and credible challenge and support to councils, bringing together political and managerial leadership, through the use of Member and officer peers".
- 2.1.3 The LGA requires every member council to undertake a Corporate Peer Challenge at least once every five years, and by doing so, this process is recognised by the LGA as a way to assist councils in meeting their Best Value Duty. The Best Value Duty is a statutory requirement contained within Part 1 of the Local Government Act 1999. It requires authorities to "Make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised".
- 2.1.4 During the visit, local government peers provided feedback to the council on a range of corporate issues, based on evidence and information that is provided to them, and interviews and focus groups that took place with a range of staff, councillors, partners and other key stakeholders.
- 2.1.5 The Peer Challenge is available at no cost to the Council. The Peer team undertake a review of key finance, performance and governance information and spend up to four days at the council to assess that information to provide challenge and support.

2.2 About the Corporate Peer Challenge process and requirements from the LGA

- 2.2.1 Following a Corporate Peer Challenge, a report outlining the key findings and recommendations from the peer team is shared with the council. In the spirit of openness and transparency, councils are required to publish this report within three months of the visit. The council is also required to publish an action plan, setting out key actions in response to the recommendations contained within the report, no later than five months following the visit.
- 2.2.2 All Corporate Peer Challenges now include a progress review which takes place approximately ten months after the original visit. The progress review provides space for a council's senior leadership to report to the peer team on the progress made against the corporate peer challenge recommendations, discuss early impact or learning and received feedback on the implementation of the action plan.
- 2.2.3 Following the progress review, a report outlining the peer team's findings is shared with the council. Again, in the spirit of openness and transparency, the council is required to publish this report, no later than 12 months after the original visit.
- 2.2.4 From April 2024, the LGA have implemented an improved and refreshed approach to delivering Corporate Peer Challenges. As part of this new approach, the LGA have improved the overall rigour and robustness of the approach, with an increased focus on governance, finance, performance and assurance, alongside investments and improvements made to the training and development of Member and officer peers, and improved robustness and consistency of reporting.

2.3 Our last peer challenge in Kirklees

2.3.1 Our last Corporate Peer Challenge took place in July 2019. In the period since then, we have experienced and dealt with some significant challenges, including responding to and recovering from the global coronavirus pandemic, and dealing with the cost-of-living crisis and global economic turbulence that has endured since then. The council has since been dealing with some significant financial challenges, as costs and demand for council services continued to grow following these events.

2.3.2 Our last Corporate Peer Challenge included recommendations around strengthening strategic communications, resident engagement, place-based working, and strengthening the corporate centre to develop its capacity. It also provided recommendations around prioritising a decision around the long-term future of the ALMO (Kirklees Neighbourhood Housing) and pushing for the establishment of a single Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). Recommendations related to streamlining decision-making and bringing clarity around roles and responsibilities of Members and officers were also provided, plus a recommendation around reviewing the electoral cycle to support a more stable electoral pattern.

2.3.3 Looking back, we've made good progress against delivering on those recommendations:

- We've successfully brought the ALMO back in-house – now 'Kirklees Homes and Neighbourhoods'.
- We have a clear communications strategy, made improvements to citizen engagement and we now routinely work in a 'place-based' way.
- Since the previous Peer Challenge, we've increased capacity in our corporate centre, for example by providing additional resources for improvement and transformation activities.
- Following the last Peer Challenge, we worked closely with our partners to help establish one Clinical Commissioning Group – NHS Kirklees CCG – which helped to simplify and strengthen partnership working arrangements within the health and care sector.
- We've also worked to streamline our decision-making processes, and to ensure there is greater clarity between the role of officers and Members.
- We still however operate a staggered election system held by thirds, as there was no local appetite at the time to review the electoral pattern.

2.3.4 Five years ago, the council also embarked upon the development of plans for a substantial and unprecedented programme of regeneration and development for all our major towns and villages. In July 2019, Council agreed our vision for the future regeneration of Kirklees, and in 2020, the Huddersfield and Dewsbury blueprints were approved by Cabinet. Fast forward to now, this vision is starting to become a reality, and works have commenced for several of our most significant projects.

2.4 Scope and focus for the Corporate Peer Challenge

2.4.1 All Corporate Peer Challenges focus on five core elements, as well as any additional local areas of focus or specific challenges requested by the council. The five core elements are:

- Local priorities and outcomes
- Organisational and place leadership
- Governance and culture

- Financial planning and management
- Capacity for improvement

2.4.2 Considering our story so far, and the challenges we were grappling with at the time, we asked the peer team to focus fully on the five core areas of inquiry, as these were the areas where we felt we would get the most useful insights. At the time of the visit, we understood our most critical task was to be able to confidently deliver on our budget, at the same time as continuing to deliver on our outcomes and not losing sight of the longer-term regeneration and place shaping ambitions for our future. We understood that we had difficult decisions ahead, and to support those decisions, we wanted to ensure we had the right priorities, structures, culture and corporate enabling services in place.

2.5 Feedback provided in the report

2.5.1 Following an extensive period of planning and preparation for the visit, including a rigorous self-assessment process, there was nothing unexpected in terms of feedback presented in the report. The LGA were complimentary about our planning and preparation for the visit and stated that the 'position statement' prepared for the team was well written and an honest reflection of the challenges facing the council.

2.5.2 The Council's Executive welcomes the findings in the LGA report and accepts the suggested key recommendations. The findings will help to inform and shape our ongoing improvement journey and builds on recent work to improve and strengthen our position for delivering on our priorities into the future. It will support the council to deliver on the priorities set out within the refreshed 2025/26 Council Plan, which was agreed by Council on the 5 March 2025.

2.5.3 Alongside the key recommendations for improvement, the report contains some helpful positive feedback on the council's overall current position. The LGA outlined how the council:

- Is now in a more stable position, following recent changes to political and officer leadership.
- Has a clear vision and priorities set out in the council plan, underpinned by a clear range of annual deliverables.
- Is tackling its financial issues in a thorough and strategic way and is seeking external support. The budget position is improving and normalising.
- Can point to some real successes in delivering both savings and improved outcomes, for example in both adults and children's social care (with strong performance and leadership visible across these services).
- Has performance reporting that is presented well, is accessible and timely, and has links to budget reporting.
- Has stakeholders and public sector partners who report positive working relationships with the council and plays an active role in the West Yorkshire Combined Authority.
- Has an established Executive Leadership Team which is widely respected across the organisation.
- Has council staff that generally feel valued. There is a clear sense of commitment to the council as an organisation, as well as to Kirklees as a place.
- Has governance arrangements that are working well. The Cabinet is collegiate and prepared to take tough decisions, scrutiny is taken seriously, and the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee is engaged and well supported.

2.6 Key recommendations provided by the LGA

2.6.1 The full feedback report provided by the LGA is provided at **Appendix B** to this report. Within the report, 8 key recommendations for improvement were provided, and these have been included below:

- **Recommendation 1:** Continue to keep a grip on the council's budget. The financial challenges continue to be significant and require ongoing focus to deliver planned savings and replenish reserves. A longer-term plan needs to be developed to deliver a more sustainable financial situation for the council.
- **Recommendation 2:** Apply successes and learning from transformation across the council more widely. There is a range of good projects and approaches from transformation, but they tend to remain within services. There are successes in children and adults social care and the learning from these approaches could be better understood by wider council services to help drive their improvement.
- **Recommendation 3:** The council has some large-scale regeneration plans agreed with delivery underway. Revisit the plans to ensure they are affordable, viable and deliverable in the current financial context. Part of this consideration should include the balance of housing provision.
- **Recommendation 4:** Explore planning in a more expansive and strategic way, including the role it can play in delivering the housing aspects of the new local plan, nationally determined local targets and how the council will deliver much-needed new homes.
- **Recommendation 5:** Work more closely with businesses and economic partners to define potential growth, skills and investment opportunities in Kirklees.
- **Recommendation 6:** At the political level there has been some instability over the past 18 months. Given the position of no overall control, Members need to be mindful of their roles, responsibilities and work collaboratively to put communities and residents first. The council needs to keep working at good governance across a range of issues, including clarity of reports, Member development programmes and councillors' behaviours.
- **Recommendation 7:** Considerable progress has been made in some service areas, with tangible progress, for example in children's services. Maintain this focus so that performance continues to improve.
- **Recommendation 8:** Use this peer challenge as an opportunity to pivot towards a longer horizon for key decisions.

2.7 Process for developing the action plan

2.7.1 Once the LGA report was received, a draft set of actions were produced, based on conversations with key officers who have expertise and experience related to the thematic areas of focus for the key recommendations. These draft actions were then discussed and further refined with the Executive Leadership Team and Cabinet.

2.7.2 The suggested areas of focus for actions were then also discussed and shared with members of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, and Political Group Leaders. The plan will also then be discussed at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on the 4 April, to seek feedback and engagement with delivery and reporting against the action plan once it is approved. Feedback from Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, and feedback from Group Leaders, has been included in section 5 of this report.

2.7.3 Once Cabinet has approved the action plan presented at **Appendix A**, it is recommended that this then be presented to Council on 23 April 2025 for noting, so that Members are aware of the LGA's recommendations, and the associated actions the council will be taking in response.

2.8 **Proposed ongoing delivery monitoring and reporting**

2.8.1 Once the action plan is approved, ongoing internal delivery monitoring and reporting will commence. The action plan provided at **Appendix A** has included specific timescales associated with each action, and a responsible Service Director.

2.8.2 Detailed information on progress with delivery will be collated against each action on a regular basis. Reporting will utilise a RAG (Red, Amber Green) rating approach to provide an 'at-a-glance' overview in terms of success and progress against delivery in accordance with the stated timescales.

2.8.3 In September 2025, the Local Government Association will come back to Kirklees to undertake a progress review. Following the progress review, a report outlining the peer team's findings is shared with the council. The council is then required to publish this report, no later than 12 months after the original visit.

2.8.4 In advance of the LGA progress review, it is proposed that a full update against delivery of the actions is provided to Cabinet, and the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee in the Summer (specific committee meeting dates currently to be confirmed).

3. **Implications for the Council**

3.1 **Council Plan**

The action plan sets out some important next steps for the council and builds on recent work to improve and strengthen our position into the future. It will support the council to deliver on the priorities set out within the refreshed 2025/26 Council Plan, which was agreed by Council on the 5 March 2025. Within the 2025/26 Council Plan, the development and delivery of the LGA Peer Challenge action plan has been included as a 'Area of Focus' within the 'Getting the basics right – a balanced budget and a modern organisation' priority, and delivery of the action plan will be reported via regular progress and delivery reports relating to the 2025/26 Council Plan.

3.2 **Financial Implications**

One of the five core areas of focus for the Corporate Peer Challenge is around 'Financial Planning and Management'. The first recommendation provided in the LGA report outlines how the council should develop a longer-term plan to deliver a more sustainable financial situation. As such, the action plan provided at **Appendix A**, includes some key actions to deliver upon this recommendation.

3.3 Legal Implications

The LGA requires every member council to undertake a Corporate Peer Challenge at least once every five years, and by doing so, this process is recognised by the LGA as a way to assist councils in meeting their Best Value Duty. The Best Value Duty is a statutory requirement contained within Part 1 of the Local Government Act 1999.

3.4 Other (e.g. Risk, Integrated Impact Assessment or Human Resources)

The action plan presented at **Appendix A**, relates to a wide range of different areas of activity that the council delivers.

Integrated Impact Assessments for individual changes and projects referred to within the actions will be developed as required.

The council maintains a corporate risk register, and risks for individual areas of activity within the action plan will be managed accordingly and as part of the established corporate process.

Some of the actions within the action plan, relate to making improvements to ways of working for council employees. Most notably, the 'Our Council' culture reset initiative (included as an action against recommendation 8) will support positive changes in the way that all council employees work, for example by supporting an improved focus on the needs of our customers, encouraging better budget management, and further work to embed our corporate values of kindness, inclusion and pride.

4 Consultation

Corporate Peer Challenges involve extensive consultation, which is carried out by the Peer Team during the week of the visit. This is so the team can gather evidence and formulate their feedback. The LGA Peer Team spent four days onsite at Kirklees Council during which they:

- Gathered evidence, information, and views from more than 35 meetings, in addition to further research and reading. Most of these meetings were face to face, and some were conducted via MS Teams.
- Spoke to more than 140 people including a range of council staff together with Members and external stakeholders.
- Attended meetings at Dewsbury Town Hall.

5 Engagement

5.1 Relevant council officers (including Service Directors and the Executive Leadership Team) and the Cabinet, have been engaged in the development of the action plan.

5.2 Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee were also engaged in the development of actions for the action plan, at a meeting on the 20 March 2025. Group Leaders were also engaged and asked for feedback on development of the actions. Areas of focus for actions against each of the recommendations were provided to Members and feedback was received and considered by the Executive. Feedback from Members includes:

Recommendation 1 (Budget)

- Support for further development of the cross-party working group focused on the budget.
- Suggestion to compare best practice from other local authorities to ensure we are able to develop a clear strategy for replenishing reserves.

Recommendation 2 (Transformation)

- Support required for the third sector to enhance transformation opportunities.
- Suggestion around the need for improved external communication around transformation initiatives, including the need to balance this with transparency around reducing service provision.

Recommendation 3 (Regeneration plans)

- Question around how the capital programme review and outcomes will be communicated, and how stakeholders / Members will be engaged with as part of that review.
- Request for Elected Members to be engaged in any revisions / refreshed plans for regeneration.
- Regeneration plans should focus not just on the larger, capital funded schemes, but also support to smaller, local businesses.
- Consideration should be given to how we ensure our fair share from funding from the West Yorkshire Combined Authority.

Recommendation 4 (Planning)

- Support for inclusion of the new Housing Strategy as an action, and a suggestion to ensure this strategy will cover delivery of a range of different housing needs and that it addresses sustainability, affordability and local demographics.

Recommendation 5 (Working with business and economic partners)

- Support for a stronger role for local businesses in shaping policy and strategy, through a range of engagement forums.
- A question around how we will better integrate with WYCA on growth, skills and investment.
- A suggestion around ensuring there is a focus on engaging with locally owned and managed businesses so that we can maximise opportunities and benefits for local communities and the Kirklees economy.

Recommendation 6 (Member roles and development)

- Support for an improved offer around Member training and development, and a request to ensure Members are involved in the development of the offer.
- Suggestions for things to include in the Member development offer, including mentoring / peer support, and making training mandatory for being on a committee.
- A suggestion to ensure we focus on the promotion and communication of the member-officer protocol, as this will help ensure it is used and adhered to.

- A point highlighting the importance of the new member induction, and support provided to new committee members.

Recommendation 7 (continuing to improve performance)

- Further detail required around how performance will be monitored in Children's Social Care.
- Ensure that scrutiny has a robust role in monitoring implementation of any improvement plans.
- Important that Adult Social Care has similar levels of monitoring as Children's Social Care, and Homes and Neighbourhoods.

Recommendation 8 (developing a longer-term horizon)

- Inclusion of Digital Strategy as an action supported and noted the need for this to be ambitious. Request for further information around the priorities and implementation of this. Linked to the Digital Strategy, a suggestion to consider more innovative app-based solutions for citizens to report issues or request a service. Ensure the Digital Strategy takes improvements to accessibility into consideration.
- Support for improved communication and clearer expectations with regards to our customers.
- Support for review of existing strategic partnership agreements to ensure long-term co-operation with our partners.
- A suggestion around having a clearer, more consistent voice as a council when it comes to what our ask is from a regional / West Yorkshire perspective. We need to be clearer about what it is we need from the region, and the outcomes from regional working we want to achieve.

Members also:

- Noted the required next steps of the LGA in terms of progress reporting.
- Agreed with the need for ongoing reporting and engagement with Scrutiny around delivery of the action plan and were supportive of the inclusion of timescales against the actions.
- Supported the suggestion to return to OSMC on the 4 April to review the final action plan, and to provide further feedback on next steps and reporting.

Based on the feedback provided by Members, we will:

- Ensure we engage with locally owned and managed businesses as part of the action around delivering the Kirklees Economic Summit, so that we can maximise opportunities and benefits for local communities and the Kirklees economy.
- Consider the development of key messages / development of a consistent voice as a council when working at a regional level, as part of work to develop a new Partnership Framework.

The feedback from Members on the action plan, demonstrates support for the actions that have been included, with helpful suggestions and further things to consider as part of implementation related to specific actions, and in terms of ongoing reporting that will be required. Points of feedback in this section will be fed back to lead officers to be considered when implementing related actions, following approval of the action plan.

6 Options

6.1 Options Considered

Cabinet may either choose to approve the plan as presented or indicate any amendments or changes they may wish to make.

Our recommendations to Cabinet are:

- For Cabinet to note the LGA's report, provided for context at **Appendix B**.
- For Cabinet to consider the contents of this report and approve the action plan as set out in **Appendix A**.
- For Cabinet to consider and approve the proposals for ongoing reporting against the action plan, taking into consideration any feedback provided by OSMC on the 4 April, provided in **section 2.8** of this report.
- For Cabinet to agree to present the action plan to **Council on 23 April 2025** for noting, so that Members are aware of the LGA's recommendations, and the associated actions the council will be taking in response.

6.2 Reasons for recommended Option

- Kirklees Council is a member council of the LGA. The LGA require all member councils to undertake a 'Corporate Peer Challenge' at least once every five years.
- As part of the Corporate Peer Challenge process, councils are required to develop and publish an associated action plan to deliver improvements based upon the recommendations provided by the LGA following the visit. Following the visit to Kirklees, we are required to publish an action plan by the 29 April 2025.
- The action plan sets out some important next steps for the council and builds on recent work to improve and strengthen our position into the future. It will support the council to deliver on the priorities set out within the refreshed 2025/26 Council Plan, which was agreed by Council on the 5 March 2025.

7. Next steps and timelines

Following approval by Cabinet, and subject to any additions or changes:

- The action plan will be submitted to Council on the 23 April 2025 for noting, so that Members are aware of the LGA's recommendations, and the associated actions the council will be taking in response.
- Monitoring and reporting against delivery of the action plan will commence, with reports to Cabinet, Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, and to Council as set out in **section 2.8** of this report.
- The LGA will visit the Council in September 2025, to carry out a progress review. This progress review will enable the council to report to peers on the progress made against the recommendations, discuss early impact or learning, and receive feedback on the implementation of the action plan.
- The Council and the LGA will then publish a progress review report by the end of November 2025, which must be within 12 months of the initial Corporate Peer Challenge visit.

8. Contact officers

Stephen Bonnell, Head of Policy, Partnerships, and Corporate Planning
Stephen.bonnell@kirklees.gov.uk

Michelle Hope, Corporate Planning and Coordination Manager, Policy, Partnerships and Corporate Planning
Michelle.hope@kirklees.gov.uk

9. Background Papers and History of Decisions

The LGA's feedback report, has been published on the Council's website here:

[LGA \(Local Government Association\) Corporate Peer Challenge | Kirklees Council](#)

Previous Corporate Peer Challenge Report and Action Plan (Approved at Council, 15 January 2020):

[Agenda for Council on Wednesday 15th January 2020, 5.30 pm | Kirklees Council](#)

[CPC Feedback and Action Plan Report - Full Council - 15 January 2020.pdf](#)

10. Appendices

Appendix A: LGA Corporate Peer Challenge – Kirklees Council Action Plan

Appendix B: LGA Corporate Peer Challenge – Kirklees Council Feedback Report

11. Service Director responsible

Andy Simcox, Service Director Strategy and Innovation

LGA Corporate Peer Challenge – Kirklees Council Action Plan

Recommendation 1

Continue to keep a grip on the council's budget. The financial challenges continue to be significant and require ongoing focus to deliver planned savings and replenish reserves. A longer-term plan needs to be developed to deliver a more sustainable financial situation for the council.

Current position and next steps

As we emerged from the pandemic, the global economic challenges began to escalate, which resulted in some significant financial challenges for the council. Rising costs and demand for services became an increasing, significant problem. Initially, the council was able to manage the emerging financial challenge by utilising reserves to address the deficit. However, as the impact worsened, and as reserves continued to be depleted, the council quickly moved to put in place an approach to help support effective decision making around the development, delivery and monitoring of budget savings and our overall financial position.

We now have robust financial monitoring arrangements in place and have strengthened public and Member engagement around the development of our budget. These arrangements will help us to ensure we can keep a grip on the council's budget, and monitor the delivery of savings, pressures, and related service budgets. Overall, our budget position has now significantly improved, and we are looking ahead to a period of greater financial stability. As we now enter the new 25/26 financial year, we have a balanced budget agreed by Council, which sets out the starting point for achieving that stability.

The council welcomes this recommendation and acknowledges the importance of moving towards a place where reserves are replenished back to a more stable level, and we have a longer-term plan for our finances to enable more effective planning. This will help put us in a stronger position to be able to deliver on our outcomes into the future, and the actions to support this recommendation will help us move forward towards delivering this.

Actions

Ref.	Action	Timescale	Responsible Service Director
1.1	Ensure monthly and quarterly financial monitoring to officers and Members continues to be clear, accurate and enables responsive and timely decision-making to support effective service delivery and planned savings.	April 2025 – March 2026	Service Director, Finance
1.2	Continue to strengthen and develop our cross-party working group and budget consultation to support ongoing financial monitoring and the development of the next budget.	April 2025 - March 2026	Service Director, Finance

1.3	Publish a 'budget book' – which provides a breakdown of all service budgets to support greater transparency and challenge and ensure a shared understanding of service budgets across the council.	August 2025	Service Director, Finance
1.4	<p>Within the next MTFFS (Medium-Term Financial Strategy) update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a detailed 3-year budget for each service, to support longer term financial planning and stability for services across the council. • Continue to sustainably increase reserves over the coming years, including unallocated reserves. 	September 2025	Service Director, Finance
1.5	Implement an annual benchmarking exercise to help with the identification of further opportunities for transformation and efficiencies.	September 2025	Service Director, Strategy and Innovation

Recommendation 2

Apply successes and learning from transformation across the council more widely. There is a range of good projects and approaches from transformation, but they tend to remain within services. There are successes in children and adults social care and the learning from these approaches could be better understood by wider council services to help drive their improvement.

Current position and next steps

The council has a dedicated corporate transformation service as well as several change hubs across the organisation. Senior officer oversight of our corporate transformation programme comes via the Executive Leadership Team and four directorate-specific Change Boards.

Transformation efforts focus on both cross-council and individual service areas. We have seen some key transformation successes over recent years, including:

- Being seen as a leader on special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), through, for example additionally resourced provision, and working with the Department for Education to bring down costs and improve some of our most important services
- Continuing to deliver our Access to Services Strategy, increasing the accessibility of services and improving how we work with people when they contact us - achieving a 17% reduction in calls on Council Tax from 2022/23 to 2023/24.
- Reforming our local planning application process, with the aim of making it more modern and efficient.
- Embedding a succession planning process, with the aim of mitigating the risk of our most critical posts being left vacant through employees leaving the organisation.

We have a clear, effective, and well-established approach to delivering, reporting and decision making around transformation initiatives, and we acknowledge the LGA's recommendations in relation to needing to share successes and learning more widely across the council, to help drive improvement across wider council services. The actions within this plan will build on our approach to transformation.

Actions

Ref.	Action	Timescale	Responsible Service Director
2.1	Implement a new approach for resourcing transformation activity, with a focus on better outcomes and further efficiencies, including tracking the benefits and impacts of the initiatives which are delivered.	April 2025	Service Director, Strategy and Innovation
2.2	Develop and begin delivery of a new plan for more effective support and engagement with the third sector working closely with our local infrastructure and voice organisation (Third Sector Leaders) to identify ways to enable communities to do more for themselves.	July 2025	Service Director, Strategy and Innovation

2.3	<p>Further develop our council-wide approach to resourcing, connecting, and communicating about transformation initiatives, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening connections and coordination between transformation initiatives. • Sharing more widely the learning, methodologies, and approaches. • Communicating our transformation successes to Members and officers, to help build a culture of ongoing transformation and support shared learning. 	<p>September 2025 (develop) December 2025 (implement)</p>	<p>Service Director, Strategy and Innovation</p>
2.4	<p>Identify opportunities for partnership-led transformation in Kirklees and ensure these are being effectively managed.</p>	<p>March 2026</p>	<p>Service Director, Strategy and Innovation</p>
2.5	<p>Develop and describe a council-wide transformation vision for long-term transformation across the whole council connected to the next, longer-term Council Plan.</p>	<p>March 2026</p>	<p>Service Director, Strategy and Innovation</p>
2.6	<p>Deliver the Assets Property Transformation Programme, using external advice to support implementation.</p>	<p>March 2026</p>	<p>Service Director, Development</p>

Recommendation 3

The council has some large-scale regeneration plans agreed with delivery underway. Revisit the plans to ensure they are affordable, viable and deliverable in the current financial context. Part of this consideration should include the balance of housing provision.

Current position and next steps

Five years ago, the council embarked upon the development of plans for a substantial and unprecedented programme of regeneration and development for all our major towns and villages. In July 2019, Council agreed our vision for the future regeneration of Kirklees, and in 2020, the Huddersfield and Dewsbury blueprints were approved by Cabinet. Fast forward to now, this vision is starting to become a reality, and works have commenced for several of our most significant projects. Our regeneration plans for our towns and villages, are starting to take shape.

Our Capital Strategy outlines over £1.29bn of investment in Kirklees over the next five years, and we recognise that such a significant level of ambition and investment will naturally take time to start to demonstrate the benefits and outcomes for the future, and for the people and places of Kirklees. We accept the LGA's recommendation to revisit our regeneration plans, because we understand that as these plans span such a long period of time, that the external environment and wider context can change. The recent financial challenges facing the council has certainly meant changes to the wider context for these plans. We acknowledge that our plans must remain affordable, viable and deliverable, and the actions contained within this plan will help provide the necessary assurance moving forward.

Actions

Ref.	Action	Timescale	Responsible Service Director
3.1	Review the capital programme, to make sure we have affordable plans, including considering an externally led capital plan review.	September 2025	Service Director, Finance
3.2	Complete the review of phase 5 of Our Cultural Heart to ensure we maximise value for money whilst maintaining our ambition of long-term benefits for people, businesses and the local economy.	September 2025	Service Director, Skills and Regeneration
3.3	Analyse the direct and indirect costs and implications for our major regeneration projects across all council services and directorates and continue to deliver a 'Cultural Heart mobilisation' plan to manage associated risks and opportunities in a cross-directorate coordinated way.	March 2026	Service Director, Finance/ Service Director, Strategy and Innovation/ Service Director, Skills and Regeneration

3.4	Conduct a governance review to ensure the right governance mechanisms are in place to support ongoing, effective delivery monitoring of our capital plans and programmes. Implement refreshed governance arrangements.	March 2026	Service Director, Finance
3.5	Decide priorities for securing further external investment funding - including considering the balance of housing provisions alongside other types of development and investment – and proactively monitor external funding opportunities to support these priorities.	March 2026	Service Director, Strategy and Innovation / Service Director, Skills and Regeneration
3.6	Develop a longer-term strategy and plan to support the development of residential provision in our town centres, linked to the update of the Local Plan.	March 2027	Service Director, Development
3.7	Refresh all our town centre blueprints and smaller centre regeneration plans to reflect the current financial context and consider future plans beyond the current timescales, ensuring they are fit for the future and ready for changes in transport, technology, and the economy.	March 2027	Service Director, Development

Recommendation 4

Explore planning in a more expansive and strategic way, including the role it can play in delivering the housing aspects of the new local plan, nationally determined local targets and how the council will deliver much-needed new homes.

Current position and next steps

The current Kirklees Local Plan was first adopted in 2019. At the time, the council committed to reviewing the plan within five years, to ensure it was still fit for purpose. The Kirklees Local Plan sets out the planning policy framework for the district, guiding future growth and change over a longer-term planning period. It includes a vision and strategic objectives for development within Kirklees, how and where different levels of development will be located, and a suite of planning policies to guide decisions on planning applications.

On the 25 November 2024, the council launched the Kirklees Local Plan Early Engagement, to help shape an updated local plan for the future. The new plan will account for wider environmental and economic changes, and ensure the Local Plan is in keeping with emerging national planning policy changes.

The national planning policy landscape is changing, with new, emerging government guidance and legislation, and new mandatory housing targets for local authority areas. Ensuring the council continues to monitor and analyse changes to policy and understands how this should be reflected in local plans and strategies, will be important for shaping local planning delivery moving forward.

The council recognises that as well as delivering mandated house building targets, having the right balance of housing provision is also important, which includes market rate, affordable, and social housing. The new housing strategy for Kirklees aims to understand and deliver the right balance of housing Kirklees will need for the future.

The council proposes that through continued monitoring of national policy changes, delivery of a new Housing Strategy, and continued work to refresh and review the Local Plan, we will sufficiently address the LGA's recommendation in this area.

Actions

Ref.	Action	Timescale	Responsible Service Director
4.1	Monitor and analyse the impact of national policy changes related to planning (including more powers for Combined Authorities), and ensure we are prepared to benefit, including through further workforce development to ensure we have sufficient capacity and skills.	December 2025	Service Director, Skills and Regeneration/ Service Director, Strategy and Innovation

4.2	Develop a new Housing Strategy for Kirklees, setting out a long-term approach for the types of housing Kirklees will need in the future, including the balance across market, affordable, and social housing.	December 2026	Service Director, Development
4.3	Continue to progress work associated with the implementation of the next refresh of our Local Plan ('Local Plan 2'), including local engagement and cross-party working.	December 2027	Service Director, Skills and Regeneration

Recommendation 5

Work more closely with businesses and economic partners to define potential growth, skills and investment opportunities in Kirklees.

Current position and next steps

We are currently working on finalising the Inclusive Economy Strategy with an expectation to take it to Cabinet in July and Full Council in August. The final version will incorporate views from recent partnership engagement. The strategy will focus on place, businesses, people, skills and employment within Kirklees, and will form the basis of strategic partnership working with business and economic partners to define potential growth, skills and investment opportunities in Kirklees going forward. The strategy will help deliver on the government's ambitions for growth and will be aligned with the West Yorkshire Growth Plan.

The business and economic partnership landscape in Kirklees is complex, and there are several partnership forums which exist that support the delivery of our economic development ambitions. We acknowledge the LGA's recommendation that there is more work to do to build on existing partnership engagement mechanisms in this area, and to work closely with partners to deliver the economic strategy once it has been agreed.

In response to this recommendation, the council proposes the delivery of an economic summit, which will bring together a wide range of businesses and economic partners, to develop tangible actions for delivering the economic strategy, and for responding to economic opportunities across Kirklees. We acknowledge the important role that locally owned and managed businesses have to play as part of this engagement and will ensure there is sufficient representation from local businesses as part of our approach to this. The event will also inform the shape and focus for ongoing partnership engagement, which will be supported by more effectively mapping out the forums and mechanisms which already exist in this area. We also recognise the role of the third sector as part of responding to this recommendation and will develop a programme of activity which more effectively links the sector to wider economic development work at both a local and regional level.

Actions

Ref.	Action	Timescale	Responsible Service Director
5.1	Building on partner engagement, begin delivery of the Inclusive Economy Strategy.	August 2025	Service Director, Skills and Regeneration
5.2	Deliver a Kirklees economic summit, bringing together key businesses and economic partners to develop tangible actions for delivering the Inclusive Economy Strategy and responding to economic opportunities across Kirklees.	By December 2025	Service Director, Skills and Regeneration
5.3	Review the economic partnership arrangements, including engagement mechanisms, identifying any areas for improving collaboration and communication, and decide actions to progress these.	December 2025	Service Director, Skills and Regeneration

5.4	In the context of increasing powers and flexibility at a West Yorkshire level, support better connections between the Combined Authority and local third sector organisations with a role supporting economic growth, skills, and investment. This includes organisations indirectly supporting the economy through improving health and wellbeing.	March 2026	Service Director, Strategy and Innovation
5.5	Deliver a programme of events for local businesses helping them connect to local third sector organisations to support their aspirations for Corporate Social Responsibility and Social Value, including volunteering and mentoring.	March 2026	Service Director, Strategy and Innovation/ Service Director, Skills and Regeneration

Recommendation 6

At the political level there has been some instability over the past 18 months. Given the position of no overall control, Members need to be mindful of their roles, responsibilities and work collaboratively to put communities and residents first. The council needs to keep working at good governance across a range of issues, including clarity of reports, Member development programmes and councillors' behaviours.

Current position and next steps

Kirklees has robust and effective systems and relationships in place which support the council to be effective, well run, and accountable. The council uses a strong leader model, with a Leader and Cabinet, supported by a corporate governance, audit and scrutiny process. Our operational practice under this model is assessed against our local code of corporate governance.

For much of our history, we have been under no overall control, and majorities are often small. We also have elections three in every four years, meaning that political power has changed more often than in some neighbouring authorities. This means that officers have been required to effectively engage with councillors across parties, especially through our scrutiny functions, to ensure decisions – especially difficult or longer-term decisions, are sustainable.

We welcome the recommendation from the LGA, as we understand that maintaining good governance practices is critical for our success moving forward, and how collaborative working across members and officers help to establish the fundamental building blocks for good governance, particularly because of our local political context.

We will continue to work on reviewing our Member Development Framework and officer training and development initiatives, which help councillors and officers develop their knowledge and skills, so all councillors feel confident in their role supporting and challenging council services, and officers feel confident in their role working with and alongside members. We will also refresh and review our member-officer protocol, which sets out standards for collaborative working across members and officers.

To support these actions, and to ensure the foundations for ensuring good governance are in place, we will also make further improvements in the clarity of decision-making reports, including improving templates, processes, and guidance.

Actions

Ref.	Action	Timescale	Responsible Service Director
6.1	Update and improve awareness of the Member-officer protocol across both Members and officers and continue to identify issues and required action through reports to standards committee every six months.	May 2025	Service Director, Governance and Commissioning
6.2	Make further improvements in the clarity of decision-making reports, including improving templates, processes, and guidance.	July 2025	Service Director, Governance and Commissioning

6.3	Review and improve existing officer training and development initiatives for working with and alongside Members, to help develop a shared understanding of what working together looks like.	January 2026	Service Director, Governance and Commissioning
6.4	Develop and launch a new Member Development Framework, and associated action plan, which aims to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bring together existing support • identify opportunities for further support • This will support new and existing Members. 	January 2026	Service Director, Governance and Commissioning

Recommendation 7

Considerable progress has been made in some service areas, with tangible progress, for example in children’s services. Maintain this focus so that performance continues to improve.

Current position and next steps

Even though addressing our financial situation continues to be challenging, we also continue to manage services well and make good progress on our improvement plans. Our recent Children’s Services assessment by Ofsted of ‘Good’ – demonstrates the improvement journey we’ve been on since 2016 when these services were deemed ‘Inadequate’.

Our Housing Improvement Board is now making good progress on addressing issues around fire safety, and damp and mould from the recent Regulator for Social Housing notice. We self-referred ourselves to the regulator, as we knew we had specific challenges we should make them aware of, and by actively engaging with the regulator, we knew we’d get the right support to help us tackle these issues. We’ve got significant transformation programmes in place for Adult Social Care, for SEND, and Kirklees Homes and Neighbourhoods. We are also implementing plans to tackle some of the issues we’re experiencing around temporary accommodation and homelessness.

The council has improved its performance monitoring processes to ensure it is more transparent and supports effective management and decision-making. We produce a quarterly Council Plan and Performance monitoring report, approved by Cabinet, detailing progress and key performance measures. We have also introduced a quarterly corporate reporting cycle, which consolidates key quarterly reports and aligns them with organisational decision-making structures. This includes budget monitoring, transformation programme reporting, risk reporting, and performance updates, fostering coordinated and strategic decision-making.

Moving forward, we will ensure that we can maintain an effective, ongoing approach to monitoring and reporting on performance across all council services, ensure there is a continued focus on specific areas where improvements have recently been made to maintain that, and a focus on specific areas where it is important to maintain robust monitoring to deliver the improvements we require. The actions included for this recommendation will support a corporately coordinated approach to the maintenance and delivery of our continuous improvement journey.

We are encouraged to see the LGA acknowledge the improvement journey we are on, and the good progress we have made over the last few years. We support the recommendation that we must focus on ensuring we are able to maintain these improvements moving forward.

Actions

Ref.	Action	Timescale	Responsible Service Director
7.1	Develop an overview of external inspections, and any associated improvement plans to ensure there is sufficient planning and coordinated follow up. This includes inspections related to CQC, SEND, and the Regulator for Social Housing. Develop a set of principles for engaging with inspection regimes.	September 2025	Service Director, Strategy and Innovation

7.2	Ensure an effective, ongoing approach to monitoring and reporting performance across the council, that effectively informs decision making around improving performance.	September 2025	Service Director, Strategy and Innovation
7.3	Support and guidance provided to services around service planning, supporting service delivery against the priorities set out within the Council Plan and associated annual budget.	September 2025	Service Director, Strategy and Innovation
7.4	Ensure effective delivery and performance monitoring across children's social care, to ensure recent progress and improvements are maintained over the long-term.	Review by December 2025	Service Director, Child Protection and Family Support
7.5	Ensure effective delivery and performance monitoring across Kirklees Homes and Neighbourhoods, to ensure required improvements are delivered over the long-term.	Review by December 2025	Service Director, Homes and Neighbourhoods

Recommendation 8

Use this peer challenge as an opportunity to pivot towards a longer horizon for key decisions.

Current position and next steps

The Council's vision and supporting outcomes have been in place for nearly 10 years – and have continued to provide us with a long-term framework for planning and delivery, working together alongside our partners. The council's vision and priorities are detailed within our 2025/26 Council Plan, which is aligned with our annual budget. Both were approved by Council on the 5/6 March 2025.

In response to this recommendation, and other feedback we've received, we are proposing that we review these key commitments alongside our partners, to ensure they are fit for purpose, relevant in the current context, and provide a clear basis for what it is we want to achieve together for the longer-term benefit of the places and people who live and work in Kirklees. Linked to the LGA's recommendation around having a longer-term strategy for the budget, we support this recommendation and agree that it is time to review our longer-term strategic approach. Alongside the review of our main partnership commitments, we also propose to develop a longer-term Council Plan, which will set out key priorities and areas of focus beyond the next financial year.

To support delivery of the peer challenge action plan, the 'Our Council' culture refresh initiative is underway, building on our existing approach to support positive changes in the way that all council employees work. The initiative will help support the council to have an improved focus on the needs of our customers, encourage better budget management, and ensure we continue to embed our corporate values of kindness, inclusion and pride.

The actions we have included against this recommendation, will support the council in positioning itself towards a longer-term horizon, and support effective decision-making, partnership working, and service delivery that is focused on outcomes and a clear vision for the future for the people and places of Kirklees.

Actions

Ref.	Action	Timescale	Responsible Service Director
8.1	Launch and begin delivery of the 'Our Council' culture refresh in support of the peer challenge action plan and other improvements.	April 2025 – September 2025	Service Director, Strategy and Innovation
8.2	Review current strategic partnership commitments as set out within the current Council Plan, with a view to developing a refreshed Partnership Framework for a longer-term period. This will include engagement across key partnerships, and potentially the development of a supporting action plan.	By November 2025	Service Director, Strategy and Innovation
8.3	Ensure we continue to monitor national policy changes and implications across all council directorates (e.g. devolution,	March 2026	Service Director, Strategy and Innovation

	local government finance, and planning) to maximise the benefits for Kirklees residents.		
8.4	Deliver the customer expectations programme, which aims to deliver a customer-focused culture, shared customer expectations, and make it easier for residents and customers to engage with the council.	March 2026	Service Director, Strategy and Innovation
8.5	Develop a new longer-term Council Plan, supported by the implementation of multi-year local funding settlements and more flexible West Yorkshire funding, to maximise the benefits for Kirklees residents.	By March 2026	Service Director, Strategy and Innovation
8.6	Develop a new Digital Strategy, setting out how we will maximise the opportunities for technology and data to support our outcomes over the longer-term, including through considering the skills and capabilities we need in the organisation and the role of artificial intelligence.	March 2026	Service Director, Strategy and Innovation
8.7	Work with partners on shared leadership and management development programmes for more efficient leadership development and support connections across our organisations.	September 25 - March 2026	Service Director, Strategy and Innovation

LGA Corporate Peer Challenge

Kirklees Council

26-29 November 2024

Feedback report



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1. Introduction

Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) is a highly valued improvement and assurance tool that is delivered by the sector for the sector. It involves a team of senior local government councillors and officers undertaking a comprehensive review of key finance, performance and governance information and then spending four days at Kirklees Council to provide robust, strategic, and credible challenge and support.

CPC forms a key part of the improvement and assurance framework for local government. It is underpinned by the principles of Sector-led Improvement (SLI) put in place by councils and the Local Government Association (LGA) to support continuous improvement and assurance across the sector. These state that local authorities are: Responsible for their own performance, Accountable locally not nationally and have a collective responsibility for the performance of the sector.

CPC assists councils in meeting part of their Best Value duty, with the UK Government expecting all local authorities to have a CPC at least every five years.

Peers remain at the heart of the peer challenge process and provide a 'practitioner perspective' and 'critical friend' challenge.

This report outlines the key findings of the peer team and the recommendations that the council are required to action.

2. Executive summary

After a period of political upheaval during the summer of 2024 the council is now more stable. The new leader of the council and the chief executive have a constructive working relationship, and cabinet and the executive leadership team (ELT) are working well together. Working relationships at the senior levels are based on cordiality and appropriate levels of challenge.

In August 2023 the council's finances were in the local and national media spotlights due to concerns about whether it would issue a S.114 notice. Although news about the council's finances have continued to attract attention since then, some of this is because of the actions the council has had to consider and act upon in order to

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stabilise its finances and have included some difficult and high-profile decisions which have attracted local and national interest.

The council is tackling its financial issues in a thorough and strategic way and seeking external support, for example from external advisers to review the technical accounting approach to minimum revenue provision (MRP) and views to help it shape what it does next. The scale and public profile of the budget has meant that a lot of corporate focus has been on the short term, particularly on tackling its in-year budget positions, delivering on savings proposals for 2023/24 and 2024/25 and preparing savings proposals for 2025/26.

It can however point to some real successes in delivering both savings and improved outcomes, for example in both adults and children's social care. Some of this has been driven by cost, but there are also approaches to transformation and improvement which could be applied elsewhere across the wider organisation, that would help support better services for residents.

The council reports its performance using an array of graphics and data which show it is performing both against its own historic data, as well as to other councils, and national trends. The information is presented well and is accessible, and is timely, with links with budget reporting. There is an ambition to build on what the council is already doing well, to explore how to use data better and with more insight and analysis. This will help to improve decision making and targeting of resources for the longer term.

Not all councillors behave in ways which are expected of them and there needs to be a greater focus on achieving and maintaining standards in public life. Some councillors are new and are still learning their ways around how the council works. A minority of councillors behave discourteously and unprofessionally: this is unacceptable irrespective of the issue, circumstances or their duration on the council. All members should consistently work to the highest standards of behaviours, and accept and receive support, advice and feedback where it is offered from officers.

The council continues to face difficult decisions over the next few months and years, and must continue to address them, and maintain its grip for the foreseeable future.

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The peer team gained the sense that the approach to the council's budget is improving and is normalising. The leadership is juggling the short- and medium-term challenges whilst looking to the longer term.

A change in political leadership inevitably brings new ideas and a different emphasis and interpretation of existing plans and new aims and ambitions. Some plans such as the council's regeneration plans were crafted and agreed pre-Covid, but the context has changed. The new local plan will also shape the built environment across the borough and brings new opportunities for investment and housing delivery. Revisiting big strategic plans in the context of the council's very significant budget pressures, alongside more discussion with partners, stakeholders and businesses about their aspirations for Kirklees might produce the same proposals or different ones.

A next step should be to accelerate thinking about a sustainable, longer term financial vision for the council. Such a vision should not be undertaken in isolation and it needs to be both ambitious and realistic. It needs to be joined up to more exploration of big ideas, such as what the council's future role should be; how and what it can provide for residents; and exploring with residents what communities and individuals can do for themselves.

3. Recommendations

There are a number of observations and suggestions within the main section of the report. The following are the peer team's key recommendations to the council:

3.1 **Recommendation 1: Continue to keep a grip on the council's budget.**

The financial challenges continue to be significant and require ongoing focus to deliver planned savings and replenish reserves. A longer-term plan needs to be developed to deliver a more sustainable financial situation for the council.

3.2 **Recommendation 2: Apply successes and learning from transformation across the council more widely**

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There is a range of good projects and approaches from transformation but they tend to remain within services. There are successes in children's and adults social care and the learning from these approaches could be better understood by wider council services to help drive their improvement.

3.3 Recommendation 3

The council has some large-scale regeneration plans agreed with delivery underway. Revisit the plans to ensure they are affordable, viable and deliverable in the current financial context. Part of this consideration should include the balance of housing provision.

3.4 Recommendation 4

Explore Planning in a more expansive and strategic way, including the role it can play in delivering the housing aspects of the new local plan, nationally determined local targets and how the council will deliver much-needed new homes.

3.5 Recommendation 5

Work more closely with businesses and economic partners to define potential growth, skills and investment opportunities in Kirklees.

3.6 Recommendation 6

At the political level there has been some instability over the past 18 months. Given the position of no overall control, Members need to be mindful of their roles, responsibilities and work collaboratively to put communities and residents first. The council needs to keep working at good governance across a range of issues, including clarity of reports, member development programmes and councillors' behaviours.

3.7 Recommendation 7

Considerable progress has been made in some service areas, with tangible

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progress, for example in children's services. Maintain this focus so that performance continues to improve

3.8 Recommendation 8

Use this peer challenge as an opportunity to pivot towards a longer horizon for key decisions.

4. Summary of peer challenge approach

4.1 The peer team

Peer challenges are delivered by experienced elected member and officer peers. The make-up of the peer team reflected the focus of the peer challenge and peers were selected by the LGA on the basis of their relevant expertise. The peers were:

- Member peer, Cllr Chris Read, leader, Rotherham Council
- Member peer, Philip Broadhead, leader of the Conservative Group, Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council
- Chief executive peer, Sam Plum, Westmorland and Furness Council
- Senior officer peer, Jill Travers, director of law and corporate services, Wirral Council
- Senior officer associate, Dipti Patel, former Corporate Director of Place, LB Harrow
- Senior officer associate, Neil Thornton, former director of resources/S.151
- Shadow officer peer, Nathan Koskella, policy adviser, Local Government Association
- LGA peer challenge manager, Judith Hurcombe

4.2 Scope and focus

The peer team considered the following five themes which form the core components of all Corporate Peer Challenges. These areas are critical to councils' performance and improvement.

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- 
1. **Local priorities and outcomes** - Are the council's priorities clear and informed by the local context? Is the council delivering effectively on its priorities? Is there an organisational-wide approach to continuous improvement, with frequent monitoring, reporting on and updating of performance and improvement plans?
 2. **Organisational and place leadership** - Does the council provide effective local leadership? Are there good relationships with partner organisations and local communities?
 3. **Governance and culture** - Are there clear and robust governance arrangements? Is there a culture of challenge and scrutiny?
 4. **Financial planning and management** - Does the council have a grip on its current financial position? Does the council have a strategy and a plan to address its financial challenges? What is the relative financial resilience of the council like?
 5. **Capacity for improvement** - Is the organisation able to bring about the improvements it needs, including delivering on locally identified priorities? Does the council have the capacity to improve?

As part of the five core elements outlined above, every Corporate Peer Challenge includes a strong focus on financial sustainability, performance, governance, and assurance.

4.3 The peer challenge process

Peer challenges are improvement focused; it is important to stress that this was not an inspection. The process is not designed to provide an in-depth or technical assessment of plans and proposals. The peer team used their experience and knowledge of local government to reflect on the information presented to them by people they met, things they saw and material that they read.

The peer team prepared by reviewing a range of documents and information in order to ensure they were familiar with the council and the challenges it is facing. This included a position statement prepared by the council in advance of the peer team's

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time on site. This provided a clear steer to the peer team on the local context at Kirklees Council and what the peer team should focus on. It was a well written and honest reflection of the challenges facing the council. Preparations included a comprehensive LGA Finance briefing (prepared using public reports from the council's website) and a LGA performance report outlining benchmarking data for the council across a range of metrics. The latter was produced using the LGA's local area benchmarking tool called LG Inform.

The peer team then spent four days onsite at Huddersfield during which they:

- Gathered evidence, information, and views from more than 35 meetings, in addition to further research and reading. Most of these meetings were face to face, and some were conducted via MS Teams.
- Spoke to more than 140 people including a range of council staff together with members and external stakeholders.
- Attended meetings at Dewsbury Town Hall.

This report provides a summary of the peer team's findings. In presenting feedback, they have done so as fellow local government officers and members.

5. Feedback

5.1 Local priorities and outcomes

Kirklees Council's vision and priorities are clearly set out in the council plan, which was most recently refreshed in March 2024. These priorities are underpinned by a clear range of annual deliverables and are reported to cabinet on a quarterly basis. They do however feel overshadowed by the council's large scale, immediate and ongoing budget pressures.

Performance in adults and children's services is good and the leadership of these services has been strong. The council has a strong story to share with others on what it has done to improve these services, including how it has delivered outcomes on a comparatively low-cost basis.

There is a good degree of self-awareness and identification of the issues that the

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council is facing. The position statement prepared for the CPC was well written and feels like an accurate reflection of those challenges. Thorny issues are discussed and explored at the highest levels through cabinet and the executive leadership team and reflects this self-awareness. The decision to self-refer to the Housing Regulator is a good example of this self-awareness and a wider tendency towards openness about the risks the council faces.

Despite the challenges facing the council on its budget, there is also a willingness to look to the future. Some of this is driven by finances and practicalities about what is and is not affordable, and there is also an enthusiasm across pockets of the organisation to start to explore what the council's long-term role is, and what its relationships with residents could be. This may include some radical thinking about what the council should no longer do and what else it can encourage people to do for themselves. Some of that may include exploring what might currently feel like thinking the unthinkable, as well as being ambitious for a new relationship between the citizens of Kirklees and their council.

5.1.1 Performance

The council can evidence its focus on outcomes through a range of achievements. These include sustained improvement in children's services resulting in a good inspection rating from Ofsted in July 2024. There are a low numbers of looked after children and external placements, and with low-cost bases in adults and children's social care, and no waiting lists for domiciliary care. As of November 2024, the council had yet to receive notification of inspection for its adults services from the Commission for Quality Care (CQC), although it was anticipating an inspection at some point during 2025. The council's own analysis of its housing performance has led to it self-referring to the Regulator of Social Housing.

The LG Inform headline report illustrates the council's comparative performance data and can be found here [Headline Report for Kirklees Metropolitan Borough Council - Bar Chart View | LG Inform](#). This shows the council's performance when compared to "family group" similar councils as:

- Better than average performance on uncollected council tax

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- Lower than average numbers of young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs)
- Lowest expenditure per head on children's services for the family group
- Higher than average expenditure per head on housing and on highways and transport services
- Higher than average numbers of people on the housing waiting list
- Lower than average performance on household recycling and higher than average levels of residual household waste
- Average levels of expenditure per head of population on adult social care

Other successes for Kirklees include:

- The National Health Innovation Campus in Huddersfield, developed by the University of Huddersfield, aims to improve health outcomes
- Lobbying for the upgrade of the Trans-Pennine line between Manchester, Huddersfield, Leeds and York

There is clarity about the challenges facing the council and an ambition to be efficient and a modern deliverer of services. There is an established transformation programme in place, which reports into the executive leadership team quarterly. This includes challenge and consideration of progress and has helped to bring more grip on delivery. Its focus is wide and includes programmes for adult social care, special educational needs (SEND), homes and neighbourhoods, temporary accommodation, and access to services.

Performance overall is reported against the established strategic priorities set out in the council plan on a quarterly cycle. Information in the reports is presented clearly with a good use of graphics and benchmarking of comparative data, including trends.

The council is data rich although there are concerns about the variable quality of some of its performance data and how its reported. There is a clear ambition to build on the already solid approach to improve on analysis and intelligence, and to explore further how artificial intelligence can add value, and to do this well may require some



further capacity. Learning could be drawn in from services which have taken a successful transformative approach, for example in social care, as the council can evidence good leadership and service improvement in these areas.

In response to the last CPC in 2019 the council has, amongst other things, brought its housing function back in-house; lobbied for the establishment of a single Clinical Commissioning Group; developed a communication strategy; and worked to streamline its decision-making processes.

5.2 Organisational and place leadership

Stakeholders and public sector partners speak of positive working relationships with the council. Externally of the council and internally there is strong support for the focus on regeneration and the scale of the council's ambition to improve its town centres.

Partners, particularly businesses, would welcome more opportunities to engage with the council at strategic levels, particularly on the delivery of priorities and outcomes for residents, communities and the economy. Consideration of how to do this is needed, so that everyone is as clear as they can be about the role and potential roles they can play in making Kirklees a better place.

The council has in place large scale ambitious regeneration programmes with significant external funding to both develop and enhance its major towns and villages. The Blueprints for both Huddersfield and Dewsbury details the ambition and outcomes to create thriving modern town centres which are now taking shape. The focus for Huddersfield is to enhance the cultural opportunities and creating business growth that benefits communities. It is essential that the council actively considers how it can integrate housing development through the regeneration of Huddersfield town centre to concentrate and address the increasing demand for housing needs alongside meeting the Local Plan housing delivery targets. In respect of Dewsbury there is an imperative to accelerate housing development delivering the 3,500 new homes and economic growth within its 10-year plan by 2029. Understanding the financial and market challenges will be pivotal for achieving the council's ambitions.

As a constituent member of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) the

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council can do more to make the most of its assets and what it can deliver for the region. It could do this by showcasing and promoting Kirklees' location, heritage and connections to attract opportunities and funding, highlighting its destination for inward investment and business growth. The council may wish to refresh its economic strategy reflecting and integrating The West Yorkshire Plan and inward investment proposals through more engagement with business partners locally and regionally.

The business sector and local partners are extremely keen to collaborate and work with Kirklees Council, sharing their knowledge, skills and expertise to support growth and investment. The peer team felt that the council should therefore consider how to do this, and an option could be to create a formal business Partnership Forum/Board.

A review of the existing Kirklees local plan was undertaken in accordance with national planning guidance and reported to Cabinet in October 2023. It highlights a number of areas to be addressed, in particular, the absence of a five-year supply of housing, not meeting housing delivery targets, how to reflect the ambition of being net zero and climate ready by 2038, as well as addressing issues to achieve the twenty three thousand jobs target. The council has already committed to starting its review, including launching early engagement to shape the updated local plan with its vision & objectives; the main challenges and future opportunities in planning, critical to propel and meet the housing targets, promote development and economic growth and achieve net zero.

The council plays an active role in the West Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority. There is recognition of the opportunities and investment potential arising through being a good partner and having constructive working relationships in the region.

The senior political leadership team is in place and efforts are made to have a calm and consistent approach to working with members across the council. Working relationships between councillors and officers appear to be largely good and respectful, and at the most senior levels the collective working appears to be organised and structured, so that everyone knows what to expect.

The executive leadership team is also established and widely respected across the organisation. Council staff generally feel valued and there is a clear sense of



commitment to the council as an organisation, as well as to Kirklees as a place.

Investment has been made into communications both internally and externally. Internally this included staff initiatives to attract and retain staff and to motivate staff who have worked at the council for a long time.

Historically the council's approach to transformation appears to have been largely sat within services and regarded as a departmental approach and resource. Since the arrival of the new chief executive there is growing corporate ownership of what transformation is. This could be extended further by applying some of the learning from successes in social care to other parts of the council which need to deliver further improvement, for example in housing. Extending this learning as well as WHAT could also help to foster more of a "one council" approach to working to further improve services and realise savings in a more consistent way.

Further clarification is needed on what transformation means in Kirklees Council. This is common across local authorities where transformation can mean the approach that the council has taken to cut its budgets and services. In some places transformation means how the council is delivering services in a different or enhanced way which better meets the needs of its residents. It can also be a combination of both. Further articulation of what it means would be helpful so that staff can understand their roles and be encouraged to innovate further.

The new government announced new housing delivery targets in July 2024 of 1.5m new homes across the country, which in turn will bring increased pressures to deliver more new homes across Kirklees. Delivery against the local plan has not met the council's own targets, and the new local plan will have bigger targets. More leadership and strategic thinking is needed if these national and local targets are to be met, about what types of housing and where they will be built in Kirklees.

Elsewhere in this report reference is made to the council's capital plan and regeneration ambitions, and their affordability. The regeneration plans are bold and well defined. Any review of urban regeneration sites should consider new and different opportunities and whether considerable numbers of new homes could be delivered as part of a mixed-use approach to urban sites. Reprofiting of these plans



may help to deliver more than one strategic ambition for the council, as well as contribute to its financial sustainability.

There is an emerging economic strategy which at the time of the CPC was in its early stages. Conversations with partners and stakeholders early on in this process would be welcomed by them, so they can support the Kirklees brand and influence future growth and investment.

Partners in the public, voluntary and community sectors are keen to work more closely with the council, as are businesses. All are clear that they would value deeper working relationships to understand each other's plans and strategies, as well as how they can contribute to shared goals and ambitions.

Investment in internal and external communications has been increased. Communicating what the council delivers across the whole of its borough and addressing perceptions of where resources are distributed and whether these are fair or not have been an ongoing feature of local debate in Kirklees since the council's creation in 1974. Communications need to continue to try and address these perceptions and could be part of the broader debate about the council's relationship with its citizens.

5.3 Governance and culture

Overall, the governance arrangements are working well. The cabinet is collegiate and is prepared to take tough decisions. Scrutiny is taken seriously and plays a robust, critical friend role to decision making, with a lot of emphasis and input into the pre-decision stage. The corporate governance and audit committee is engaged and is well supported. There are clearly differences in political approach and opinion which result in robust debate across the council's membership.

The senior officer team works with pace and focus and is widely observed by staff as showing good managerial leadership to the organisation. Partners praise the visibility of the executive leadership team. As might be expected in an era of change, and with some new appointments, there is an appetite from staff for that visibility to both increase and be sustained.



The political changes and budget pressures of the past two years have been challenging for the council. At times a minority of councillors have reacted in ways which have been difficult for the council's reputation, as well as for their fellow politicians and officers to accommodate. The council's monitoring officer has written to councillors to remind them of the expectations on them as agreed through the council's code of conduct and its constitution. Councillors should not have to be reminded on how to behave and need to be mindful of the reputational damage that poor behaviours can have on partners' willingness to work with the council. Everyone – members and officers – should remind themselves of the Nolan Principles of Public Life and strive to embody them [The Seven Principles of Public Life - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-seven-principles-of-public-life). As there are not any elections for 2025 this year could be used to embed good practice, maintain constructive political dialogue and remind councillors of their obligations through a focused programme of member development. As with many other councils there is often a lower than ideal uptake of councillors for the latter, despite officers' best efforts in making sessions accessible, at the right time and with the right content.

Good, clear and well written reports are essential for good decision making. How information is presented overall would benefit from an overhaul, particularly in helping the reader get the gist of a report and why particular reports are being presented to particular arenas. Which information is included and how it is included should also be revisited, to ensure that decision making is undertaken in the most transparent and accessible ways. This should include information about the chronology of previous decisions/processes to date, the alternative options considered and discarded, reflect external and internal advice/perspectives and ensure that risks are clearly explained.

Given the ongoing challenges facing the council's finances it will be important for members to retain strong oversight of the budget, performance and risk. Outside of the budget setting process how can cross-party oversight be maintained throughout the municipal year?

5.4 Financial planning and management

Kirklees Council's financial position has been managed over the past 14 years



through a combination of savings programmes, income generation and significant use of reserves. As with other metropolitan councils, the reduction in funding has been substantial: between 2011-2019 its budget reduced by £160m. The revenue budget for 2024/25 is £363.5m. The council continues to face rising costs with increasing demand, especially in social care, housing and SEND. The Housing Revenue Account has a budgeted deficit of £4.5m for the current financial year and a projected deficit of £4.7m for 2025/26. The dedicated schools grant (DSG) had an accumulated DSG deficit of £43.7m on 31st March 2024, and which is expected to increase by £20m during 2024/25.

The council's finances attracted national attention in the summer of 2023 when concerns were raised about it being at risk of a S.114 notice. Efforts to stabilise the finances appear to have worked so far, in that the council is more confident in its abilities to manage its future substantial funding gaps, although some of the steps it is taking through changes to services and closing some amenities also attract significant media and local interest. The council plan for 2024/25 was agreed in March. Its stated first priority is to "address our financial position in a fair and balanced way": members and officers know there is more to do in order to balance its budget for the medium and long term, and much of this will require difficult decisions and steadfastness to achieve.

If the current trajectory is adhered to, the overall amount of the council's reserves will have reduced by over £140.8m (70 per cent) between March 2021 and March 2027. Beyond the current financial year, the council's medium term financial plan has a significant identified shortfall of £40.9m by 2029/30. At 31st March 2025 the council is forecasting total useable reserves will be £56.6m, and the minimum, working balance is assessed at £15m, with a desirable working balance of £25m.

At the time of the peer challenge in November 2024 the council's second quarter monitoring report was available. This was forecasting a net overspend of £10m for the 2024/25 financial year, some of which related to slippage in the delivery of savings targets. The aim in part is to stem this gap through the use of budget contingencies and further use of reserves.

For 2023/24 the council met all of its in-year savings targets of £19.8m, although

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£6.1m of this arose from a revised approach to the technical accounting adjustment of MRP. However, the quarter two monitoring report for 2024/25 shows difficulty in achieving these further savings targets, given that these are savings on top of previous years savings. The overall forecast for the delivery of in-year savings is at 79 per cent. The savings targets for 2024/25 and 2025/26 exceed 10 per cent of the council's net budget.

Measures taken during 2024/25 to contain expenditure so far include:

- The cessation of non-priority expenditure
- Stricter controls on recruitment, with all review by executive directors and the cross-directorate people panel for all recruitment requests
- Ongoing review of discretionary fees and charges with a view to full cost recovery
- Accelerating asset sales and seeking further options for asset disposal
- Reviewing the capital programme

Consideration should also be given to accelerating some decisions and implementing sooner what needs to stop if it has become unaffordable. This means stopping doing some things, reconfiguring services, ongoing and aggressive rationalisation and disposal of assets. It also means revisiting contracts and considering new ones which bring in opportunities for further cost control or reductions in expenditure and creating income.

There is an intention to “rebase” the revenue budget so that it more accurately reflects demand and the realities involved in delivering services according to the council's policy framework and known pressures. This “rebasings” if reflected in the budget for 2025/26 will require a considerable amount of effort, discipline and determination to achieve because the council's reserves are too low to keep bailing out overspending services.

Progress has been made with planning for the 2025/26 budget although the timing of the peer challenge meant that the proposals had not been approved by cabinet at that point. The draft budget proposals for 2025/26 were due to be published earlier

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than in previous years, in early December 2024. Delivery of the 2025/26 budget will require achieving significant further savings from services, as well as use of reserves and funding increases to close the gap.

The capital plan is of a significant scale and magnitude of £1.4bn to 2032. The current year's capital programme is £278.7m of which £47.8m relates to the HRA. The bulk of the general fund programme is for regeneration, investment in transport connectivity, town centres and the cultural offer. Given the timing of the peer challenge, now would be a good time to revisit the scale of the programme to ensure it still fits with the council's overall aims and intentions, and to take a hard look at its affordability. Given the pressures on the revenue budget, the size of the capital plan means the cost of servicing the debt involved will put more pressure on the revenue budget. The council should consider the capital plan in the round and ask firstly, is it still affordable in its current context? Secondly, if it is fully delivered what contribution will the plan's projects will make to the sustainability of the council? How will its projects contribute to improving the council's overall tax base either through council tax or national non-domestic rates (business rates) growth?

Overall, the revenue budget position depends heavily on the identification and achievement of savings plans, one-off pots of funding and the use of reserves. This is a precarious and urgent position which members and officers are acutely aware of, and the need to go further and more quickly is reflected in the position statement. These issues must be addressed now and without delay: budget sustainability is the singular fundamental and most important issue facing Kirklees Council.

Further application of cost benchmarking will help the to gain a better understanding where more cost reductions can be made across the organisation.

Although the council's financial situation does not currently grab the headlines as much at the national level, and the organisation feels more confident about how it deals with its budget, the overall risks and challenges, which are substantial, have not gone away. The short, medium and long-term budget pressures are large scale and recurring, and need addressing without delay and without complacency.

The external auditors completed the audit of 2022/23 and issued their report in



January 2024. In November 2024 the draft audit report for 2023/24 was shared with the council. Kirklees is more up to date with its audits than many local authorities. The main issues flagged by the external auditor are on the financial sustainability of the council. The 2022/23 report also recommended that the council seeks a second co-opted member for its audit committee, consistent with CIPFA advice, and this was recommended by the committee to the full council in July 2024.

Internal audit reports regularly to the audit committee. An external assessment of the service in accordance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards took place in 2022/23 and the service was found to be “generally compliant”.

5.5 Capacity for improvement

There are some good building blocks which underpin capacity for future improvement.

The leadership forum that some peer team members attended at Dewsbury Town Hall was well attended, and showed a good level of commitment to the council from managers. It reflected strong team collaboration and feedback from the senior leadership team.

A new approach to staff wellbeing and performance called ‘My Conversation’ replaces the previous staff appraisal process. This is based on a six-monthly conversation which is broad ranging and includes a focus on performance, learning and development, and health and wellbeing for employees.

Since Covid the development of the hybrid working policy and flexible working where possible has enabled rationalisation of office accommodation. Investment has been made in Civic Centre 1 to become a flagship office space which supports hybrid working.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) is taken seriously and is championed across the organisation. It has a high profile with clear political and managerial leadership endorsement. Councillors and officers are largely confident and comfortable about how they discuss and approach EDI in Kirklees. The inclusion and diversity strategy 2024-27 includes refreshed and relaunched values of kindness, inclusion and pride.



It has been communicated widely across the organisation and is closely linked to the High Five staff recognition programme.

There are equality and diversity networks across a range of protected characteristics. These are chaired by ambitious and energetic employees who are passionate about their networks and want to achieve more and are prepared to challenge the status quo. Each network has a sponsor at director level and participates in the Kirklees Leadership Forum. The chairs are keen to have more consistency of approach across the networks on matters such as budgets and what these can be used on. They are confident they can achieve more for their members through the networks internally on EDI and with communities.

The inclusive communities framework was developed with partners. Its aim is to help services plan and evaluate their work with communities.

Across the organisation and from members there is a degree of consensus for further widespread change and improvement, and this is a reflection of an overall ambition for the council, its services and the communities it serves. Some of this aspiration is stated through existing plans, such as the overall vision and priorities for Kirklees and how this will be delivered through the council plan. Some of the aspiration isn't yet worked through or determined and needs to be explored further. The desire for change also needs to be driven and balanced by the resources available and to bring more long-term sustainability to the council's finances.

The new political leadership, supported by the relatively new executive leadership team could use the time created through the fallow election year to explore and articulate a new programme of transformation for the council.

Now would be a good time to revisit the council's stated vision for the regeneration of Kirklees. In summer 2019 the overall vision was agreed and the blueprints for Huddersfield and Dewsbury were ratified by cabinet in 2020. But much has changed since then. Revisiting would help to check it is consistent with the political aspiration for the area, matched to what is known about the resources available. The timeline for this should stretch beyond the current short term budget setting cycle and focus towards the medium and long term.



In common with other metropolitan and upper tier councils there is clearly ongoing time and effort needed on the council's budget to ensure it is as robust as it can be for the future. Relative to the past two years the approach to the budget is calmer but the council knows it has much more to do.

Consideration needs to be given to whether the right resources are in the right places in order to achieve transformation it needs to be sustainable for the future and which it aspires to for its communities. The council knows it may not yet have all the skills it needs to achieve this. Continuing to bring transformation together at the corporate level and driving it more consistently and with rigour across the organisation has the potential to deliver more extensive outcomes.

6. Next steps

It is recognised that senior political and managerial leadership will want to consider, discuss and reflect on these findings. The LGA will continue to provide on-going support to the council. Following publication of CPC report you need to produce and publish an action plan within five months of the time on site, that is by 29 April 2025. As part of the CPC, the council are also required to have a progress review and publish the findings from this within twelve months of the CPC. The LGA will also publish the progress review report on their website.

The progress review will provide space for a council's senior leadership to report to peers on the progress made against each of the CPC's recommendations, discuss early impact or learning and receive feedback on the implementation of the CPC action plan. The progress review will usually be delivered on-site over one day.

The date for the progress review at Kirklees Council is during September 2025.

In the meantime, Mark Edgell, principal adviser for Yorkshire and the Humber, is the main contact between your authority and the Local Government Association. As outlined above, Mark is available to discuss any further support the council requires mark.edgell@local.gov.uk 07747 636910.