

Contact Officer: Jodie Harris

KIRKLEES COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE SCRUTINY PANEL

Wednesday 7th January 2026

Present: Councillor Andrew Cooper (Chair)
Councillor Musarrat Khan
Councillor Matthew McLoughlin
Councillor John Taylor

Co-optees

In attendance: Councillor Moses Crook
Will Acornley, Head of Operational Services
Katherine Armitage, Service Director - Climate Change &
Environmental Strategy

Observers:

Apologies: Councillor David Longstaff
Kevin Evans (Co-Optee)

- 27 Membership of the Panel**
Apologies were received from Councillor David Longstaff and Kevin Evans (Co-Optee).
- 28 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**
RESOLVED –
That the Minutes of the meeting held on 26th November 2025 be approved as a correct record.
- 29 Declaration of Interests**
No interests were declared.
- 30 Admission of the Public**
All agenda items were considered in public session.
- 31 Deputations/Petitions**
No deputations or petitions were received.
- 32 Public Question Time**
No public questions were received.
- 33 LEVI Fund for Public Electric Vehicle Charging Points in Kirklees**

Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Panel - 7 January 2026

The Panel considered an update on Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) Fund for Public Electric Vehicle Charging Points in Kirklees which was introduced by Councillor Moses Crook – Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Transport and Housing.

Jason Smith, Electric Vehicle Project Manager gave a presentation, and the Panel were advised that;

- The Electric Vehicle (EV) project included rapid charger installations funded by the market and Kirklees capital investment, the LEVI fund for localised EV hubs, CRSTS funding for EV trials, salary sacrifice car schemes, and an EV strategy to inform future planning.
- Transport for the North data projected Kirklees would require 926 public/residential charging points by 2025 and approximately 2,199 by 2030.
- Kirklees had the lowest number of charging points per 100k population in West Yorkshire.
- The Department for Transport provided £343 million capital and £37.8 million resource funding through the LEVI scheme over two financial years. Kirklees received £282,000 for Phase 1 and £2,212,389 for Phase 2, with additional capability funding for project staff.
- The LEVI fund aimed to deliver neighbourhood hubs and on-street charging, predominantly 7kW–22kW chargers, with some rapid chargers if market conditions allowed.
- WYCA led procurement and created a West Yorkshire EV Charging framework in summer 2024.
- Six providers were appointed to the framework: Zest, Ubitricity (Shell), Amey, Char.gy, Urban Fox (Balfour Beatty), and Blink. Phase 1 ITT completed in January 2025, securing an additional 58% private sector contribution, increasing the fund value from £1.41m to £2.23m.
- Phase 1 was expected to deliver 148 charging points across 25 locations in Kirklees. The contract was signed in July 2025, starting an 18-month delivery window. Ward engagement was scheduled for January 2026.
- A customer pricing strategy was agreed to maintain reasonable public charging costs. Phase 2a/b would focus on on-street charging infrastructure, as directed by Government.
- Phase 2a site selection targeted densely terraced areas using GIS data provided by the Energy Saving Trust. Green areas were identified as focus zones, excluding Phase 1 polygons.
- Capability funding for Kirklees totalled £257,000, with £87,000 expected for 2026/27. It funded the EV Project Manager (0.5 FTE) and Assistant PM (1.0 FTE), with additional revenue for Highways and Legal/Procurement roles. Funding was confirmed until April 2027, with potential extension.

The Panel noted the presentation and during the subsequent discussion, raised the following questions and points:

- In response to questions from the Panel in relation to the rationale for the locations decided for Phase 1, it was advised that Phase 1 was a pilot and funding requirements necessitated a focus on urban areas. Locations were data-driven, based on officer recommendations and an audit of car parks

Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Panel - 7 January 2026

ranked by capacity, occupancy, safety, and other factors. It was also noted that the use of funds was considered more beneficial in densely populated areas, and that this work would be complimented by improvements in public transport in rural communities. It was confirmed that Phase 2b would aim to address gaps and utilise available capital funding to support other areas. The Panel noted the response, and it was agreed that the data showing the rationale for the chosen Phase 1 locations be shared with the Panel.

- In response to questions from the Panel in relation to maintenance, it was advised that responsibility for maintenance would sit with the provider and that contractual provisions would support this. The contract was for 15 years, with plans for this to be refreshed midway through the term to reflect the market at that time. It was also noted that a key change was the introduction of the EE Charging Regulations 2023, requiring all chargers to remain at 98% working order. The Panel noted the response, and it was agreed that the contract information be shared with the Panel.
- In response to questions from the Panel in relation to innovation and how flexibility would be maintained to adopt new advancements, it was noted that chargers were aligned with the second-hand electric vehicle market and that technology was filtering down from high-end to lower-end models. It was advised that work continued with multiple providers to introduce innovation and that providers were held accountable for maintaining an innovative approach.
- In response to questions from the Panel in relation to competition in the regulation of prices and the role this played, it was advised that the challenge in terms of competition was noted as rapid chargers being installed by fast-food restaurants and supermarkets, however many long-stay car parks in Kirklees were owned by the Council. It was noted that the pricing strategy would be updated as required, and any future charging points would need to follow the competition.
- In response to questions from the Panel in relation to enforcing compliance in relation to pricing, margin caps, and sanctions for non-compliance, it was advised that this was covered within the KPIs of the original contract.
- In response to questions from the Panel in relation to VAT and encouraging the entire population to move towards EV charging, it was advised that over the 15-year contract period, consideration may be given to ways of facilitating home charging tariffs.

The Panel noted the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) Fund for Public Electric Vehicle Charging Points in Kirklees update, and it was recommended that;

RESOLVED:

1. The data set showing the rationale for Phase 1 locations be shared with the Panel.
2. The details of the contractual information be shared with the Panel.

34 Playable Spaces Update

The Panel considered a presentation in respect of Playable Spaces which was presented by Will Acornely, Head of Operational Services.

The Panel were advised that:

Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Panel - 7 January 2026

- The original Playable Spaces strategy was approved by Cabinet in 2019 to improve play quality across Kirklees, provide a financially sustainable network, and deliver benefits such as health, wellbeing, and community cohesion.
- Version 1 (March 2019) proposed converting local play areas to open greenspace with investment focused on Community and Destination sites; Version 2 (October 2019) allowed traditional equipment at all sites if requested by local communities.
- The programme launched in 2020 with £3.9m capital invested and £5.6m committed or allocated. Five years into delivery, expectations remained high, but resources were restrictive.
- Kirklees managed 314 play areas, significantly more than other local authorities, with 252 sites over 15 years old included in the original programme.
- Benchmarking was undertaken against other West Yorkshire authorities, and the Play Maintenance Team consisted of four inspectors, supported by a small construction team. Maintenance budgets were limited to £16,000 plus income generation.
- Achievements included 41% programme completion, with 59 sites completed and 43 in progress. Play value increased by 141% on average at completed sites, and £782k additional funding was secured.
- Challenges included:
 - Increased material and staffing costs, reducing value for money.
 - Higher expectations as traditional equipment was retained without additional funding.
 - Restricted variety of facilities due to budget constraints.
 - Reduced workforce and maintenance budgets impacting timelines and upkeep.
- Cost comparisons showed significant price increases for equipment and surfacing since 2020, with community play area costs rising by 41%.
- Next steps included gathering feedback from the Scrutiny Panel, reviewing options for remaining sites using an asset-led approach, and considering strategy modifications for Cabinet in late summer 2026.

The Panel noted the presentation and, during the subsequent discussion, raised the following questions and points.

- In response to questions from the Panel in relation to the budget and potential scope to work with Public Health to increase flexibility, it was advised that the programme had been entirely council and community- led. As a result, this was how areas had been chosen for uplift. It was noted that there was now an opportunity for flexibility and to identify whether the project could be needs-led.
- In response to questions from the Panel in relation to the role of planning, it was explained that the reshaping the strategy had to be done in partnership with the Planning Department and was being developed alongside the Local Plan. The strategy had supported the Council to prevent developers from placing play equipment within estates and to secure Section 106 funding for more appropriate locations.

Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Panel - 7 January 2026

- In response to questions from the Panel in relation to Section 106 funding, it was noted that discussions had begun to improve agreements and ensure wording around children's play was appropriate to achieve better outcomes within legal agreements. The Panel noted the response, and it was agreed that work continue to explore how use of the correct wording in supplementary planning documents could support better outcomes for Playable Spaces in the development of the strategy.
- In response to questions from the Panel in relation to commitments and managing expectations, it was acknowledged that engagement with communities was impacted by capacity and resourcing and that there was a need to ensure capacity for commitment before engaging with the public or elected members to maintain positive relationships. It was agreed that it was important to set expectations and aspirations in line with available resources and that the approach should remain realistic to avoid doing too much at once and to identify any potential long-term funding gaps. Conversations with Cabinet regarding resource gaps and potential changes in direction were expected to begin after summer.
- In response to concerns raised by the Panel around elongating the programme, and how this could result in newer play areas requiring maintenance later, it was confirmed that safety could be maintained and the aspiration was for all play areas to be inviting and have good play value, however, ideal quality may not be guaranteed due to budget constraints, but these gaps would be addressed as part of the strategy refresh.
- In response to concerns raised by the Panel regarding the pace of the project, it was acknowledged that thorough engagement, high level consultations and efforts to reduce costs had contributed to the delays. The speed of the programme delivery was being assessed as part of the strategy and options included site-specific consultations and streamlining processes rather than applying a one-size-fits-all approach.
- In response to questions from the Panel in relation to environmental impact, it was advised that the scheme continually identified recycling and refurbishment opportunities and explored environmentally friendly surfaces in play spaces. Biodiversity was also considered on a site-by-site basis within maintenance constraints.
- In response questions from the Panel regarding how play value was quantified, it was agreed that details of the technical assessment used for playable spaces would be shared with the Panel. The Panel noted the response and further suggested that recording visitor numbers at each play area would support robust data collection and rationale for investment. In response it was advised that discussions with other local authorities were taking place to identify effective solutions for collecting this type of data.
- In response to questions from the Panel in relation to the removal of a rope swing due to damage, it was advised that work was underway to make budgets more sustainable and that conversations with the Cabinet would begin to create direction to review budgets.
- In response to questions from the Panel in relation to play provision in town centres, it was confirmed that as part of Cultural Heart investments, consideration was being given to introducing play in town centres, ensuring safety and sustainability. Comparisons with Manchester and other cities would inform this work as part of wider town centre regeneration.

Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Panel - 7 January 2026

The Panel noted the Playable Spaces presentation, and it was recommended that:

RESOLVED:

1. Work be undertaken to explore how use of the correct wording in supplementary planning documents could support better outcomes for Playable Spaces in the development of the strategy.
2. Work be undertaken to ensure that aspirations were aligned with the available resources and that any potential funding gaps be identified.
3. Details of the technical assessment used for Playable Spaces be shared with the Panel.
4. Work be undertaken to explore how visitor numbers to play spaces can be recorded and how this data can be used to support future investment.

35 Work Programme 2025/26

The Panel reviewed its Work Programme for 2025/26 and the following items were put forward for inclusion.

RESOLVED: It was agreed that an update on progress towards net 0 targets (to include an update in relation to the Carbon Disclosure Score as well as an update on the broader strategy in the new municipal year) be presented to the Panel