

Contact Officer: Jenny Bryce-Chan

KIRKLEES COUNCIL

GROWTH AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY PANEL

Monday 11th August 2025

Present: Councillor Zarina Amin (Chair)
Councillor Timothy Bamford
Councillor Donna Bellamy
Councillor Harry McCarthy
Councillor Alison Munro

Co-optees Chris Friend

In attendance: Cllr Moses Crook, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member
for Transport and Housing
Cllr Graham Tuner, Cabinet Member for Finance and
Regeneration
Lucy Wade, Project Manager, Transport Strategy Policy,
and Development
Rory Davies, Transport Strategy and Policy Lead
Dave Wildman, Service Director, Skills and Regeneration

Observers: Cllr Cahal Burke, Chair of Overview and Scrutiny
Management Committee
Albert Hoey, work experience student

- 1 Membership of the Panel**
All Panel members were in attendance.
- 2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**
That the minutes of the meeting held on the 10 March 2025 be approved as a correct record.
- 3 Declaration of Interests**
No interests were declared.
- 4 Admission of the Public**
All agenda items were considered in public.
- 5 Deputations/Petitions**
No deputations or petitions were received.
- 6 Public Question Time**
In accordance with Council Procedure rule 11, Ms Julia Roebuck submitted written questions. In accordance with Council Procedure rule 37, the Chair agreed that the

Growth and Regeneration Scrutiny Panel - 11 August 2025

question could be asked under agenda item 8. A response was given by the Cabinet Member for Finance and Regeneration.

7 Kirklees Transport Strategy, Consultation Results and Adoption

Cllr Moses Crook, Cabinet Member for Transport and Housing, introduced the agenda item, advising the Panel that it is a positive time to be bringing the first Kirklees Transport Strategy through the governance process for adoption. He explained that there are many opportunities for companies to benefit, for example with the bus franchising, the TransPennine route upgrade project underway, mass transit or tram in the pipeline and the development of West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) LTP4. In addition, further powers coming with further funding through the extension of the devolution process in West Yorkshire.

Kirklees having its own transport strategy, aligned with LTP4, will help to embed local priorities around sustainable transport and inclusive prosperity. It will maximise the benefits to Kirklees from external funding and regional projects. Working together with regional partners but with a focus on specific transport needs in Kirklees.

In Kirklees there is higher unemployment and lower earnings than the national average, with many travelling out of the district to work. These factors all point to, inequality, exclusion, and deprivation. The hope is that this strategy will help to provide greater opportunity for communities, whilst also reducing the collective environmental impact.

The Panel was reminded that the draft strategy was presented to the Growth and Regeneration Scrutiny Panel in January 2025, following which, Cabinet gave approval for the strategy to go out for public consultation. The consultation was successful with 2112 responses, with approximately 1500 providing free text input to illustrate their concerns and interest in transport. Responses confirmed public approval of priorities in the strategy, in particular support for prioritising and improvements around bus transport, including the move to publicly controlled bus services through franchising.

The final draft of the strategy will be presented to Cabinet in September for approval. Cllr Crook thanked officers for the excellent work they have undertaken to produce the first transport strategy.

David Wildman, Service Director for Skills and Regeneration, Rory Davis, Transport Strategy and Policy Lead, and Lucy Wade, Project Manager, Transport Strategy Policy and Development, were also in attendance at the meeting to provide further details on the Transport Strategy.

David Wildman, advised the Panel that the strategy is not an action plan or a list of projects, it is a statement of intent that aligns with the Local Plan, which is currently undergoing revision, and WYCA, emerging LTP4. It sets out how transport schemes will be approached, ensuring that future work remains in synergy and alignment with regional priorities, to ensure future funding opportunities can be targeted. Importantly, it reflects the unique needs and aspirations of the district.

Growth and Regeneration Scrutiny Panel - 11 August 2025

Rory Davis provided an update on the revisions made to the strategy since its previous presentation to the Panel in January 2025. In summary, he informed the Panel that the consultation had been a wide-reaching campaign, funded by the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA), enabling engagement with communities through social media, marketing, and publicity events. Officers actively engaged with residents across the district, bringing the conversation directly to the public.

The Panel was reminded that during the January meeting, members raised several issues all of which have been incorporated in the strategy, including:

- Accessibility and the need for the strategy to support effective travel for people with disabilities.
- Concerns around safety, particularly in relation to using transport such as bus stations at night.
- Comments regarding the rollout of electric vehicles (EVs), with emphasis on ensuring businesses can support the transition without disadvantaging individuals who may face challenges installing home chargers.
- Clarification on how the success of the strategy will be measured.

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

- The report outlined public responses to the strategy's objectives. It showed that the environmental objective received 68% support, which was lower than the other objectives. Are you aware of the reasons behind this and are there any anticipated challenges in gaining wider public support for the environmental aspects of the strategy.
- What level of control will the council have over the bus fleet under the proposed bus franchising system? Will there be scope to influence the transition to electric vehicles, given that many buses operating in Huddersfield and across Kirklees are still diesel-powered, refurbished, and prone to breakdowns. Will it be possible to ensure a modern, reliable, and environmentally sustainable fleet to serve local residents?
- With regard to the statistical significance of the survey results, with 2,112 respondents which represents less than 0.5% of the Kirklees population. Are you able to provide further details how this sample size produces a confidence level of 99%, and further explanation of the methodology used to interpret the data?
- In terms of accessibility, has consideration been given to addressing the broader aspects of vulnerability, not only for women and girls but for all vulnerable adults?
- What specific metrics will be used to assess whether the strategy is successfully encouraging a shift towards public transport and active travel, the report does not clearly outline this?

Growth and Regeneration Scrutiny Panel - 11 August 2025

- Has any consideration been given to freight transport within the strategy, particularly in relation to the development of a charging network for electric trucks to support urban deliveries?

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet Member and officers be thanked for providing an update on the Kirklees Transport Strategy.

8 Our Cultural Heart Update

Cllr Graham Turner, Cabinet Member for Finance and Regeneration, introduced the agenda item, informing the Panel that the update is part of the regular update on Our Cultural Heart. He encouraged the Panel to visit the site when the opportunity arises to view the progress that has been made and to see the vision come to life.

David Wildman informed the Panel that Our Cultural Heart (OCH), is a key part of the Huddersfield Blueprint and one of the Council's flagship regeneration programmes. Referring to the presentation slides, he informed the Panel that: -

- the blueprint launched in June 2019 and identified six target areas for transformation across the town, and OCH is central to that vision.
- OCH delivers against one of the Council's areas of focus, investment, regeneration, and place and is a named programme within the Blueprint.
- The OCH Mobilisation Steering Group was established in January 2025, to work with internal services that have responsibilities as part of OCH to co-ordinate their pre and post opening budgets and preparations.
- In terms of governance and reporting, OCH reports monthly to a programme board and regeneration portfolio holder's briefings.
- To achieve the council's capital projects priorities, Cabinet approvals have reallocated funding from the OCH construction budget to support other capital priorities.

The Panel was informed that progress is reviewed through the gateway process, with key stages brought to Cabinet for consideration. This phased approach enables strategic alignment and ensures that approvals are sought at appropriate intervals. It gives the ability to make changes as needed.

The next report to Cabinet is scheduled for September 2025, with a primary focus on the next steps for delivering the museums and galleries programme. This will form part of the phase two scheme, gateway 4. At this stage, it will conclude the detailed design phase and set out the delivery targets and move to construction.

The Panel was informed that extensive communication and engagement activity is underway in relation to the scheme, supported by an ongoing communications

Growth and Regeneration Scrutiny Panel - 11 August 2025

campaign and a series of events aimed at fostering a positive atmosphere and raising the scheme's profile.

The Panel was shown an illustration which outlined the masterplan and informed that, phase one includes the food hall, new library and adjacent square. Phase two, is the museum and gallery. The other plots are Queen Street plot, public realm/park and venue and multi-story car park. The phased approach provides both the Council and Cabinet with flexibility and a review of the phases is currently being undertaken and will be presented to Cabinet in September.

The Panel was provided with a summary of the decisions taken to date in respect of phase two. This included committing funding for phase two to move towards Gateway 4, delegated authority for the enabling works for a pre-construction services agreement and delegated authority to instruct relevant works. The Panel was also provided with information which outlined the timelines and key milestones for the different phases of the scheme.

The Panel was advised that a newsletter providing updates and information and a snapshot on current progress is available on OCH website.

A member of the public attended the meeting and asked the following questions: -

- Seeing as Our Cultural Heart is about far more than bricks and mortar and is about people and place to build on and celebrate the character and culture of our diverse and exciting town, how will the existing creative organisations on the Piazza be included in the plans, particularly the Queen Street area?
- Is there potential to work with the council to create a business plan for space which will then support the existing creative ecosystem?

Panel members asked a number of questions, and made comments including some of the following: -

- The library building is Grade II listed, and the Council is currently undertaking a design review to identify cost savings, will the revised design compromise the architectural character of the original building?
- Can you explain why you aim to save on costs, and can you give an idea of how much you aim to save or need to save?
- Will councillors and the public be able to comment on the new design before they are approved?
- How realistic is the timeline for phase two and the conversion of the library building?

What are the top three current risks to the project and what contingency plans are in place should they occur, for example, finding more asbestos than expected in the museum and galleries?

Growth and Regeneration Scrutiny Panel - 11 August 2025

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet Member and officers be thanked for providing an update on Our Cultural Heart.