

Contact Officer: Sheila Dykes

KIRKLEES COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Friday 11th July 2025

Present: Councillor Cahal Burke (Chair)
Councillor Itrat Ali
Councillor Zarina Amin
Councillor Jo Lawson

In attendance: Councillor Carole Pattison, Leader of the Council
Councillor Graham Turner, Finance Portfolio Holder
Rachel Spencer-Henshall, Deputy Chief Executive
Kevin Mulvaney, Service Director, Finance
Stephen Bonnell, Head of Policy, Partnerships and Corporate Planning
Alice Carruthers, Senior Finance Officer

3 Membership of Committee

Apologies were received from Councillor Andrew Cooper.

4 Minutes of Previous Meeting

RESOLVED –

That the minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 9th and 21st May 2025 be approved as a correct record.

5 Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

6 Admission of the Public

All items were considered in the public session.

7 Deputations/Petitions

No deputations or petitions were received.

8 Public Question Time

No public questions were received.

9 Leader of the Council and Finance Portfolio Holder - Priorities 2025/26

Councillor Carole Pattison, the Leader of Council and Councillor Graham Turner, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, were welcomed to the meeting to talk about their priorities for 2025/26.

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Councillor Pattison explained that:

- The vision, eight shared outcomes, and four partnership strategies remained the same. The vision for Kirklees was to combine a sustainable economy with a great quality of life for families and communities and address inequalities.
- Delivery of the four priorities set out in the 2025/26 Council Plan, alongside partners, would help to achieve this vision:
 - Getting the basics right
 - Protecting the vulnerable and achieving inclusion
 - Thriving people and communities
 - Local economic growth
- The aim was to create a longer-term vision next municipal year, assisted by the commitment from the Government to a three-year financial settlement agreement, which was expected in November.
- Recent progress and achievements under each priority were highlighted.
- The next steps including celebrating and building on successes, taking opportunities for transformation and continuing to work across council services to deliver the priorities and focus more on customers and getting the basics right.

Councillor Turner provided an overview of the key priorities across the Finance and Regeneration Portfolio:

- The most important was the delivery of a balanced budget for 2026/2027 and proposals would be presented to Council in February 2026.
- The three-year financial settlement would aid the development of a better longer-term financial strategy and the Council was in a good position to move forward.
- The Council Plan emphasised economic growth, thriving communities and inclusive service delivery, within the Place Directorate there was a focus on regeneration, housing, infrastructure and environmental transformation.
- The aim was to review all items in the Council's Capital Plan, with the assistance of the Section 151 Officer, by September 2026.
- The Council would continue to seek out grants and pooling opportunities for investment.
- There were many active, varied regeneration projects across Kirklees; it was important that the programme of regeneration continued, to help create employment for the future and support the local economy.
- Officers were working in partnership with the University of Huddersfield and local colleges to ensure that people had the necessary skills for the workplace of the future.
- An outline was given of the work that had been undertaken to develop a new Local Plan and the next steps. The Local Development Scheme (LDS) had been submitted to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) in March 2025. Early community engagement had resulted in 650 plus responses.
- Housing growth was a key feature of the regeneration strategy, with a strong emphasis on the delivery of diverse, inclusive and future proofed housing across the district.
- There were a number of strategic sites in the delivery pipeline and the Ash View Extra Care Housing in Ashbrow was now completed; members of the Committee were encouraged to visit the site.

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- Work would also continue with investors, the Government and developers to increase town centre living across the borough.

Questions and comments were invited from Committee Members, with the following issues being covered:

- In respect of improvements in air quality, it was acknowledged that reduced emissions from vehicles had contributed to this along with various measures being taken to help the flow of traffic in air quality management zones, such as at Ainley Top.
- The provision of 18 new SEND school places was welcomed and it was questioned what the plans were to ensure the necessary resources to address the growing need in this area.
- There was a myriad of plans to address this issue. The two new specialist schools would provide additional places for SEND children but these would also be better places, for example provision for girls with Social Emotional and Mental Health needs who had previously had to attend education provision outside the district. This would also have a financial benefit for the Authority.
- There had also been an increase in 'Additional Resource Provision' and schools working in clusters to better meet the needs of those attending local, mainstream schools and maximising the use of available resources.
- The backlog, associated with difficulties in getting assessments, had decreased and the Council was discussing working with other local authorities on this issue, but the demand continued to increase.
- The impact on the whole of the family was acknowledged and it was considered that a new approach to SEND would bring about improvements in the process. There were also new Government proposals in respect of Education Health and Care Plans which would make the process easier in the future.
- The excellent service provided for people with dementia and their relatives and carers by Knowl Park House, in Mirfield, was acknowledged. Provision such as this could delay the need for people to go into residential care, but the capacity was limited and there was need for more such provision. It was noted that the staff also provided wider advice and support alongside the day care services offered.
- It was considered that residents' understanding of 'getting the basics right' differed from the Council's perception. It was explained that work was underway on a transformation project focusing on customer expectations. The aim was to try and ensure that the expectations matched the service that could be provided. The importance of effective communication was a key issue, both in terms of managing resident's expectations and being able to provide a response in a timely manner.
- Whilst the improvements to the Spen Valley Greenway were welcomed it was of concern that the waste bins were not being emptied and this had resulted in an accumulation of rubbish at entry/exit points which was unsightly and potentially hazardous. Although there could be complications in terms of land ownership and responsibility it was acknowledged that this should be addressed but that there was also the need to engage with and enable the community in respect of the responsible disposal of rubbish. There had been a recent review of bins and the position in respect of the emptying of the greenway bins would be checked.

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- Positive feedback was provided in terms of library services, including the engagement with scrutiny on this issue, and the improvements and progress made in Children's and Adults Services.
- The importance of the role and contribution of Elected Members both in terms of their knowledge of activities and groups in their communities, and the leadership and promotion of events, was acknowledged. It would be helpful for an assessment to be undertaken on the value of existing events and the benefits of them being maintained.
- It was noted that housing growth was not only about increased capacity, but also about ensuring that quality, suitable homes were built in the right places to help create communities. Quality housing led to better outcomes in terms of education and health.
- There was also a need to increase the numbers of people living in quality accommodation in town centres to boost economic activity and help them to thrive.
- In response to a question in relation addressing the impact of housing developments on existing services, particularly healthcare services, in areas where they were already at capacity; it was noted that there was a national shortage of doctors in the UK alongside a growing population and changes in demographics, which would continue to be challenging until the shortage could be resolved. The Council did not have control over this provision.
- The view was expressed that the Council had a responsibility, when making decisions around larger housing developments, to factor in, at an early stage, the infrastructure and services that were available; doctors, dentists, schools and how new provision could be attracted/provided to those areas, but also footpaths and linkages to ensure access to amenities. It was explained that the Health and Wellbeing Board was involved in the development of the Local Plan and information on demand and possible locations for surgeries etc, and opportunities to promote active travel would be part of the considerations. There was a robust process that was followed prior to sites being included in the Local Plan which would include issues such as local highways, traffic predictions and modelling for school places. Larger sites, in particular, would take many years to be completed and facilities, such as GP's surgeries, would follow in response to demand.
- The Government had just released the '10 Year Health Plan' which would make a difference to how the Council, and Combined Authority, planned health services and how these services were provided in the future.
- Innovative projects were also being developed, for example the University of Huddersfield was working with the NHS and the Health and Wellbeing Board on creating the first walk-in diagnostic centre, coupled to a University, in the country.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the Leader and the Portfolio Holder be thanked for attending the meeting to present their priorities for 2025/26 and to give a progress update.
- (2) That the priorities for 2025/26 be noted and a progress report be presented at an appropriate time.

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- (3) That it be noted that the Corporate Portfolio Holder will attend the next meeting of the Committee to outline her priorities.
- (4) That a report on the work being done in respect of 'getting the basics right' be added to the work programme and it be recommended that this work should include a strong focus on effective and timely communication.
- (5) That the Committee:
 - (i) Receive an update in respect of cyber security.
 - (ii) Consider undertaking a visit to Ash View Extra Care Housing Scheme.

10 **Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge - Kirklees Council Action Plan Progress Report**

Councillor Carole Pattison, the Leader of the Council, introduced the item in respect of the action plan developed to respond to the recommendations contained in the Local Government Association's (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge Report 2024. She commented that good progress had been made and welcomed any comments and/or recommendations from the Committee.

A presentation was given by Stephen Bonnell, Head of Policy, Partnerships and Corporate Planning. This highlighted:

- The action plan, approved by Cabinet on 8th April 2025, set out 42 actions in response to the eight key recommendations from the LGA.
- Progress as at June 2025, noting that three actions had been fully completed, associated with a new approach to resourcing transformation, improving awareness of the member-officer protocol, and improvements to decision-making reports. Of the remaining 39 actions, 38 were on track for delivery, and one action, related to the Assets Property Transformation Programme, had experienced a minor delay due to external factors.
- There would be a LGA Progress Review visit in September 2025 and it was anticipated that a further 8 actions would have been completed by that point.
- A snapshot of the detail of delivery of a number of the actions.
- The LGA and the Council would publish a progress report no later than November 2025.

In response to a question about the biggest challenge arising from the peer challenge, it was explained that this was the recommendation associated with the Capital Plan. The Peer Team had described the Council's Capital Plan and regeneration ambitions as bold and well-defined but had suggested that they should be reviewed to ensure that they were affordable, viable and deliverable in current circumstances. A review of the plan had already been underway at that point and the work to complete related actions was on track. The most helpful suggestion was considered to be that to look forward and take a longer-term view.

RESOLVED -

- (1) That the Leader of Council and the Head of Policy, Partnerships and Corporate Planning be thanked for attending to update the Committee.
- (2) That the progress made in implementing the Peer Challenge Action Plan, to date, be welcomed.
- (3) That the meaningful engagement undertaken with scrutiny on this issue, at an early stage of development of the action plan, be welcomed.

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- (4) That a further report be submitted to the Committee following the LGA Progress Review in September 2025.

11 Council Financial Outturn and Rollover Report 2024/25

Kevin Mulvaney, the Service Director, Finance gave a presentation on the financial outturn and proposals for capital rollover for 2024-2025, with reference to the report submitted to Cabinet on 8th July 2025.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Regeneration, Councillor Graham Turner, was present and introduced the item.

The presentation went through:

- The revenue headlines.
- The outturn position with figures for each directorate.
- The high-level variations for each directorate with an indication of key savings and pressures.
- Analysis of the directorate variances at outturn.
- Analysis of General Fund Reserves.
- Housing Revenue Account (HRA) position at outturn.
- HRA reserves.
- Direct Schools Grant headlines and the position in relation to the statutory override and an upcoming consultation.
- The position on the Collection Fund; Council Tax and Business Rates.
- Outturn for the Capital Budget including figures for each directorate.
- Refreshed Capital Plan 2025/26 to 2031/32.

The following points were highlighted:

- The outturn position had improved to a £5.6 million overspend, down from £9.9 million at Quarter 3 which represented approximately 1.5% of the revenue budget.
- 79% of the target for savings had been delivered.
- The year-end position on reserves and balances stood at £61 million, with the general reserve maintained at £25 million.
- Use of the voluntary revenue provision reserve to fund the overspend and create a budget contingency reserve.
- The review of the Capital Plan to ensure it reflected the ability to deliver.

Questions and comments were invited from Committee Members, with the following issues being covered:

- The total amount of arrears for Council Tax at the end of March 2025 was £33.8 million, but this went back to the year 2000. It had increased by £6.5 million from the previous year and the bad debt provision had been increased as a result. There could be a number of reasons for the increase; Council Tax had increased by 4.99% and some residents had had difficulty in paying which had contributed, there had also been changes to the council tax reduction scheme, which may have had an impact. Some residents may be behind but would catch up during 25/26. Provision was in place to assist and advise residents on the support available.

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- The Council's overall target was to recover 98.5% of all Council Tax. Work was undertaken to recover arrears from previous years wherever possible.
- In respect of the historic DSG deficit, this was a national issue affecting many local authorities. The reform proposals in relation to SEND, to be set out in an upcoming consultation, were not known at this stage but the hope was that these would benefit not just Kirklees but local authorities nationwide. Measures were being taken to reduce the overspend and reduce the in-year deficit to try and alleviate the pressure, but this was an issue that needed to be resolved at national level.

RESOLVED -

- (1) That the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Regeneration and the Service Director, Finance be thanked for attending the meeting and providing an update in relation to the Council's Financial Outturn and Capital Rollover Report 2024-2025.
- (2) That it be noted that these reports will continue to be submitted to the Committee on a regular basis and that Lead Members will identify any issues within their remit that they consider might require further scrutiny by their respective Panel.

12 Council Plan and Performance Update - Quarter 4 Report 2024/25

Stephen Bonnell, Head of Policy and Partnerships, presented the Council Plan and Performance Update Report for Quarter 4 2024-25, with reference to the report submitted to Cabinet on 8th July 2025:

- The first section of the report provided details on Council activity and delivery against the four priorities within the Council Plan 2024/25.
- The second section provided the latest data against the Council's key measures for 2024/2025 and showed a range of improvements and challenges, which were summarised in the form of charts indicating direction of travel.
- The third section gave an update on the population outcome indicators that tracked progress against Kirklees shared outcomes. It was noted that these could be influenced by regional, national and international factors.
- Benchmarking data against the key measures was included, where available, to assist in contextualizing the demand and performance trends and enabling comparison of Kirklees with regional and national rates.
- The next quarterly report would be against the priorities contained in the 2025/26 Council Plan.

In response to a question, Councillor Pattison explained that the greener, healthier Kirklees priority for 2024/25 had been integrated into the Thriving Communities priority for 2025/26.

RESOLVED -

- (1) That the Leader of the Council and the Head of Policy, Partnerships and Corporate Planning be thanked for attending the meeting and providing an update in relation to the Council Plan and Corporate Performance for Quarter 4 2024/2025.

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- (2) That it be noted that these reports will continue to be submitted to the Committee on a regular basis and that Lead Members will pick up on any items within the remit of their Panel that may require further scrutiny.

13 Corporate Risk - Quarter 4 Report 2024/25

A presentation was given by Alice Carruthers, Senior Finance Officer, in respect of the Quarter 4 2025/2026 Corporate Risk Report, with reference to the report submitted to Cabinet on 8th July 2025.

Councillor Graham Turner, Finance and Regeneration Portfolio Holder, introduced the item.

It was explained that:

- The report reflected the position at the end of Quarter 4.
- No new risks had been added or removed during the quarter.
- There had been no increase in risk scores and three risks had seen a reduction in score. Budget Monitoring and Management and Medium-Term Financial Sustainability had decreased due to the significant progress made in stabilising the financial position of the Council whilst recognising the need for continued focus. Adults Safeguarding reflected a reduction in the likelihood of the risk materialising.
- The risks relating to Adult Social Care Assurance Framework and Data and Insight for Operational Delivery of Adult Social Care would be reviewed following the CQC inspection in Quarter 1 2025/26.
- An overview was given of those areas currently having a red rating.
- Work was ongoing on the risk register for Quarter 1 2025/26.
- The reporting now provided clarity where transformation priorities aligned to risks.
- The register was continually under review taking account of thematic trends, cumulative impacts, horizon scanning and emerging risks, both internally and externally.

Questions and comments were invited from Committee Members, with the following issues being covered:

- The CQC Kirklees Inspection outcome was an item on the 2025/2026 Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel Work Programme.
- An outline the emerging risks including changes to waste strategy, delivery of corporate infrastructure projects and ensuring effective controls around CCTV.

RESOLVED -

- (1) That the Portfolio Holder and the Senior Finance Officer be thanked for attending the meeting and providing an update in relation to the Corporate Risk - Quarter 4 Report 2024-2025.
- (2) That it be noted that the quarterly reports will continue to be submitted to the Committee on a regular basis and Lead Members will identify any issues that they consider might require further scrutiny by their respective Panel.

14 Allocation of Co-optees 2025/26

The Committee considered a report in respect of the allocation of co-optees to the Scrutiny Panels for the 2025/26 municipal year.

Members of the Committee expressed their appreciation for the contribution made by the co-optees to the work of the panels.

RESOLVED -

- (1) That the allocation of scrutiny co-optees for the 2025/26 municipal year, as set out in paragraph 2.2, be agreed.
- (2) That the existing serving co-optees be thanked for their continued commitment and contribution to the work of scrutiny in Kirklees.
- (3) That the retired co-optees, Jonathan Milner, Jane Emery and Gary Kitchin, be thanked for their contribution to the work of scrutiny.