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KIRKLEES COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Friday 5th December 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, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Regeneration Clair Ashurst-Bagshaw, Head of Transformation and Culture Change John Bartlett, Head of Commercial Services Stephen Bonnell, Head of Policy, Partnerships and Corporate Planning Martin Dearnley, Head of Risk - Internal Audit and Risk Management Rachel Spencer-Henshall, Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director for Public Health and Corporate Resources Andy Simcox, Service Director - Strategy & Innovation
Apologies:	Councillor Andrew Cooper

49 Membership of the Committee

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Andrew Cooper.

50 Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

51 Admission of the Public

All agenda items were considered in public session.

52 Deputations/Petitions

No deputations or petitions were received.

53 Public Question Time

No public questions were received.

54 Corporate Financial Monitoring - Quarter 2 Report 2025-2026

John Bartlett, Head of Commercial Services presented the Corporate Financial Monitoring Report for Quarter 2 2025-2026, with reference to the report submitted to Cabinet on 2nd December 2025.

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

The presentation set out:
- Revenue headlines
- Revenue monitoring, with a breakdown across each directorate.
- Key pressures on each directorate.
- Housing Revenue Account position and variances.
- Capital Headlines.
- Direct Schools Grant (DSG) Headlines.

Highlighted points included:
- The projected outturn pressure had reduced from £5.9 million to £5.1 million since Quarter 1; the lowest Q2 overspend since the pandemic.
- The key reasons for variances were due to demand-led pressures in children's and adults' services.
- There was slippage of £6.6 million in relation to the savings target. The authority was currently on track to deliver 78% of the savings target of £30.2 million.
- Any overspend remaining at year end would need to be funded from General Fund Reserves.
- The Housing Revenue Account (HRA), had a forecast underspend of £318k but pressures remained in relation to building safety and disrepair cases.
- The Capital Plan had been reviewed and reprofiled to £254.6 million from £283.9 million with slippage of £28.9 million into subsequent years. The multi-year capital plan would continue to be kept under review.
- The Direct Schools Grant position showed an in-year deficit of £14.7 million. The statutory override had been extended to March 2028.

Questions and comments were invited from Committee Members, with the following issues being covered:
- Children's Services were working to develop more in-house provision which would help to address issues with the cost of external residential placements. The focus was on maintaining children living at home wherever possible and additional budget investment was going into an edge of care service and fostering.
- Two new special schools were being constructed which would assist significantly in bringing external placements back into the district.
- In respect of reflecting the rising demand on adult health and social care services, investment would be included within the budget for next year to address those pressures.
- In relation to the variance associated with in-house residential and supported living provision, specifically in respect of Ings Grove, further information could be provided after the meeting.
- At the current time there were £63 million of useable reserves of which £37 million was earmarked. This figure would reduce if needed to cover an overspend position at the year end. The administration was satisfied that the level of reserves was adequate at this point in time.

- Investment was proposed in the budget for 2026/27 to mitigate increases in demand and inflation.
- It was considered that the level of risk was lower than in previous years and that an anticipated fall in interest rates would improve the treasury management position.

RESOLVED –

(1) That the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Regeneration and the Head of Commercial Services be thanked for attending the meeting and updating the Committee.

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

55 Council Plan and Performance Update - Quarter 2 Report 2025-2026

Councillor Carole Pattison, the Leader of the Council introduced the report in respect of the Council Plan and Performance for Quarter 2 of 2025/26, supported by Mike Henry, Head of Data and Insight.

The report had been submitted to Cabinet on 2nd December 2025 and included:

- Details on activity and delivery against the four priorities within the Council Plan and planned activity for Quarter 3.
- The latest data against the Council's Key Measures for 2025/2026, including a summary of the direction of travel and planned activity for Quarter 3.
- Benchmarking data to contextualise the demand and performance trends and enable comparison of Kirklees with regional and national rates.
- Update in respect of transformation activities/priorities.

The following points were highlighted:

- The timeliness of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) had continued to improve.
- The proportion of children looked after in the same placement for two or more years had improved.
- The percentage of freedom of information requests completed in time had increased.
- Collection of business rates was higher than twelve months previously.
- The number of open damp, mould and condensation cases continued to reduce and the number of non-emergency housing repairs completed within the timescale had improved.
- The percentage of mothers smoking during pregnancy had reduced.
- The number of people accessing adult social care services had increased.
- Collection rates for Council Tax were lower than twelve months previously.
- The level of sickness absence for employees was 0.19 FTE days higher than 12 months ago and this was a priority for action.
- The Transformation Portfolio brought together a range of programmes and initiatives designed to deliver the ambitions set out in the Council Plan:
  - The aim was to improve outcomes for residents, communities and the organisation, foster a culture of innovation and continuous improvement,

achieve better value for money and enhance customer experience and service delivery.
- The governance, oversight and assurance arrangements, which included a dashboard with RAG ratings for each programme.
- It was suggested that if there were queries in respect of specific programmes then these might be best addressed through the relevant Scrutiny Panel.

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

- There had been a slight increase in levels of sickness, but it was considered that this may be due, in part, to better recording as a result of a focus on this issue. In areas where levels were high, action plans to address the issue had been requested.
- There were issues in respect of anxiety and mental health issues and staff were supported through ‘Care First’ and Employee Healthcare provision, including access to counselling.
- Assessing the effectiveness of counselling was a complex area acknowledging that different approaches worked for different people. A new technique called EMDR had been introduced and appeared to be having positive results.
- It was noted that early access to support could be helpful in preventing people going off sick.
- The service worked alongside colleagues from the NHS to try and ensure that staff got access to the services they needed.
- Monitoring was undertaken both from the perspective of Employee Healthcare and through managers using the sickness absence procedures.
- Assurance was given in respect of the Health and Safety at Work Act plans being in place and early assessments being undertaken for any staff that may be at risk of particular conditions. Rigorous reporting was in place for workplace incidents and accidents to ensure continuous learning.
- The Chair had recently had a briefing in respect of the People Strategy, which had included information in respect of sickness monitoring and this would be shared with the other members of the Committee.
- Work related stress was not concentrated within any particular service areas. It was acknowledged that it could become an issue in areas that were undergoing significant service change.
- The results of a recent examination of the data had indicated that in many cases where staff were off work due to anxiety, this was not work related. Work was being undertaken to identify how staff, such as those with caring responsibilities, could be supported to avoid this leading to them being off sick.
- An update in respect of the People Strategy would be included on the Committee’s future work programme.
- Up-to-date figures in respect of the collection rates for Council Tax would be available the following week. A slight decrease had been anticipated associated with changes to support.
- The improvements in respect of EHCPs was welcomed and the importance of ensuring that this continued was stressed. Changes had been made in terms of customer communication, to try and ensure that assessments were completed and that clients were kept updated as much as possible.

- In relation to whether the performance indicators were able to demonstrate outcomes and improvements in the quality of life of residents, it was pointed out that there had been a significant increase in the amount of data provided. Part of the data development agenda was to consider if there were more appropriate measures to accurately reflect residents' experience.
- There was an item on the Growth and Regeneration Scrutiny Panel Work Programme, provisionally scheduled for January 2026, associated with building safety compliance, which included damp, mould and condensation so specific questions on that issue could be dealt with at that meeting.

RESOLVED -

(1) That the Leader of Council and officers be thanked for attending to present the update.

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

56 Corporate Risk - Quarter 2 Report 2025-2026

Councillor Graham Turner, the Finance and Regeneration Portfolio Holder, introduced the Corporate Risk Report for Quarter 2 2025/26 with reference to the report submitted to Cabinet on 2nd December.

Martin Dearnley, the Head of Audit and Risk, highlighted the following points:

- The position was fairly stable with only two areas showing a change during the period: the 'emergency planning and business continuity' (HP01) risk score had reduced and a change had been made to the title of DEV03, previously 'project management and delivery' to reflect the emphasis on economic growth and resilience.
- Lead Members were invited to raise any issues within the remit of their Panels with him or the Service Directors if any further information or oversight was considered necessary.

In response to a question, it was explained that the key issue in terms of delivery of priorities was risk FIN02 'medium term financial sustainability' and the impact of the Government settlement that was expected within the next few weeks.

RESOLVED -

(1) That the Cabinet Member for Finance and the Head of Audit and Risk e thanked for attending to update the Committee.

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

57 Council Plan Pre-Decision Scrutiny

The Committee received a presentation from Stephen Bonnell, Head of Policy, Partnerships and Corporate Planning in respect of the key components of the next Council Plan for discussion and feedback.

Councillor Carole Pattison, the Leader of the Council, introduced the item and invited Member's comments.

The following points were covered:

- The purpose of the Council Plan in terms of setting out the overarching priorities and how it links with partnership strategies.
- The approach from 2026/27 and the development of a three-year plan.
- The draft priorities, which were based on the existing priorities.
- Next steps, including proposed engagement prior to submission to Council.

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

- The move towards developing a plan covering a three-year period was welcomed. It was noted that this approach had been aided by the implementation of a three-year financial settlement. In terms of the impact, this would assist in forward planning and allow improved communication of the Council's plans across the whole range of priorities over the longer term and how it planned to build on activity and progress year on year.
- The priorities had not been changed but had been strengthened and made more specific, with clarity on what the organisation was aiming to achieve.
- In respect of plans to review and refresh the plan it was anticipated that this may continue to be undertaken on an annual basis and that would involve a similar process in terms of consultation, including engagement with scrutiny. It would also be informed by all the available information in respect of financial reporting, performance monitoring and transformation activity.
- A significant level of engagement with partners had taken place. This had resulted in feedback in respect of the shared outcomes and the vision, for example setting it over a particular timeframe. It had also made clear that partners were keen to work collaboratively on longer-term opportunities, a message that had also been highlighted through the corporate peer challenge. All the feedback would be considered in taking this work forward and a revised partnership framework document would be developed.

RESOLVED -

(1) That the Leader of the Council and the Head of Policy, Partnerships and Corporate Planning be thanked for attending to update the Committee.

(2) That the comments/feedback made by the Committee be considered in the further development of the Council Plan 2026-29.

(3) That the production of a Council Plan that will cover a 3- year period, as previously discussed with scrutiny, be welcomed.

58 Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan Update

The Committee received an update, from Councillor Carole Pattison, Leader of the Council and Stephen Bonnell, Head of Policy, Partnerships and Corporate Planning in respect of progress in responding to the recommendations contained in the Local Government Association's (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge Report 2024, with reference to the report considered by Cabinet on 2nd December 2025. This also referenced the progress review report produced by the LGA further to the second visit in September 2025.

The following points were highlighted:

- The LGA had noted the progress that had been made in delivering the recommendations set out in the related action plan and that working relationships had further matured and brought stability, clarity, grip and more energy to the Council. It had also stated that there was greater confidence, tempered with realism, from the collective senior political management team about how current and future challenges would be addressed.
- 14 of the 42 actions had been completed, 27 were ongoing and on-track.
- The timescale for the action concerning review of the Capital Programme had slipped to allow account to be taken of the impact of the Government's Fair Funding Review, further detail on which was expected prior to the end of the year, and clarity in relation to the digital transformation work. Timescales for the delivery of a Kirklees Economic Summit and the review of economic partnership arrangements had been re-profiled to reflect the results of engagement undertaken with partners and ongoing work to support events focussed on investment in the district.
- The key successes to date including the culture refresh, approval of the Inclusive Economic Strategy and the publication of a 'budget book'.
- The ongoing work, key activities and next steps.

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

- In respect of which actions were the most challenging to implement. these included the review of the Capital Programme due to both the complexity and the current uncertainty around funding. The review of economic partnership arrangements was affected by economic growth which was influenced by a wide range of factors both nationally and locally.
- The collaborative working of the senior management team and the Cabinet was commended. In terms of the approach across the whole organisation/workforce it was considered that there was awareness of the Council's priorities; the end of year celebration event for staff, which tied in with the 'Our Council' principles, had been very positive and the culture refresh 'our council' reflected the whole Council approach. It was recognised that different forms of communication worked for different groups of staff and varied forms of communication were used to relay the messages.
- A staff survey had recently been undertaken and, further to this, employee engagement sessions were being planned to give staff the opportunity to talk issues through in a safe space and enhance the information that had come out of the survey. There was an intention to maintain an on-going dialogue and the employee networks were helpful in highlighting any issues. In areas where the response had been low action plans were being developed to ensure inclusion.
- There was confidence that the necessary resources were in place to progress all the actions; this had been considered in the development of the action plan.

RESOLVED -

(1) That the Leader of the Council and the Head of Policy, Partnerships and Corporate Planning be thanked for attending to update the Committee.

(2) That the update report be noted, the progress made against the actions be welcomed and a final update be provided to Scrutiny in 2026/27.