

**Name of meeting:** Corporate Scrutiny Panel

**Date:** Friday 20 October 2017

**Title of report:** Kirklees Democracy Commission - Update

**Purpose of report**

To update the Corporate Scrutiny Panel on the work of the Kirklees Democracy and in particular progress following the launch of the final report at the end of June 2017.

<b>Key Decision - Is it likely to result in spending or saving £250k or more, or to have a significant effect on two or more electoral wards?</b>	Not applicable
<b>Key Decision - Is it in the <a href="#">Council's Forward Plan (key decisions and private reports?)</a></b>	Not applicable
<b>The Decision - Is it eligible for call in by Scrutiny?</b>	Not applicable
<b>Date signed off by <a href="#">Strategic Director</a> &amp; name</b>  <b>Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Finance IT and Transactional Services?</b>  <b>Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Legal Governance and Commissioning Support?</b>	Jacqui Gedman, Chief Executive
<b>Cabinet member <a href="#">portfolio</a></b>	Councillor Cathy Scott

**Electoral wards affected:** All

**Ward councillors consulted:** All ward councillors have had the opportunity to consider the Commission's report and recommendations at the extraordinary meeting of Full Council on 10 May 2017. There will be a further opportunity at the Council meeting on 15 November 2017.

**Public or private:** Public

## 1. Summary

The [Kirklees Democracy Commission](#) has now reported its [findings](#). The Commission's work has received significant national profile. The ground breaking report, containing 48 recommendations, was discussed at Council on 10 May 2017 and was launched on 30 June 2017.

Since the report launch work has been taking place to try and determine how the outcomes of the Commission's work will be worked through in a systematic way in order to inform the following:

- The emerging strategic priorities for the Council in light of the Commission's work;
- The consequent expectations placed on the wider council, and partners, in delivering those priorities;
- The operational implications for The Democracy Service in the context of wider service redesign;

To facilitate this process the recommendations have been broken down into three categories, the details of which can be found attached at Appendix 1. Following discussion with Leading Members at their meeting on 18 July 2017 the recommendations in category 3 have been delegated to the Head of Democracy. The remainder of the recommendations will be discussed at the meeting of Council on 15 November 2017.

Corporate Panel now has the opportunity to consider these recommendations from an Overview and Scrutiny perspective and begin to explore the ways in which a contribution can be made to their delivery.

## 2. Information required to take a decision

At the outset it is important to note that Council, when it considered the Commission's report in May 2017, agreed to "note and welcome" it. This has explained, for the most part, the approach that is set out in this paper.

The majority of the Commission's recommendations will now be considered by Council on 15 November where it is hoped that clarity will emerge as to priority which will therefore inform the next phases of the work. Until that point is reached the Head of Democracy is not in a position to develop a strategic approach to delivering the wider Commission outcomes beyond the recommendations in category 3. Indeed some of those have wider linkages with other recommendations that will be considered by Council which clearly has implications for the level of progress that can be made.

If Council is minded to move progress the Council will be better placed to:

- Have an innovative and ambitious programme with a focus on local citizens – placing Kirklees at the vanguard nationally;
- Accelerate achievement of the Council's 7 shared outcomes;
- Promote civic innovation and place-based working, helping to develop a new local "social contract" with citizens, public services, business etc.;
- Help modernise the councillor role and the way it is supported now and for the future;
- Help modernise our governance and decision making arrangements now and for the future;
- Actively address devolution (from the bottom-up) and the perceived democratic deficit.

In terms of the recommendations delegated to the Head of Democracy (category 3), there will be an opportunity at the meeting to discuss progress and more importantly explore the ways in which Overview and Scrutiny can play an active part in their development and delivery. Similarly it would be helpful to discuss the wider recommendations that will be considered by Council in order to understand the priorities and perspectives of the Corporate Scrutiny Panel.

### **3. Implications for the Council**

#### **3.1 Early Intervention and Prevention (EIP)**

The focus on a citizen-led approach, in the context of the Active Citizen, has the potential to contribute to the delivery of EIP outcomes.

#### **3.2 Economic Resilience (ER)**

The focus on the notion “Business Citizenship” has the potential to contribute to the delivery of ER outcomes

#### **3.3 Improving Outcomes for Children**

The focus on civic pathways for young citizens has the potential to contribute to improving outcomes for children.

#### **3.4 Reducing demand of services**

To be determined following the outcome of the Council discussion on 15 November 2017

#### **3.5 Other (eg Legal/Financial or Human Resources)**

To be determined following the outcome of the Council discussion on 15 November 2017

### **4. Consultees and their opinions**

Initial dialogue has taken place with all Leaders of Political Groups at the Chief Executive’s Leading Members meeting on 18 July 2017.

The following have been consulted on the approach set out in this report and endorse it as a way forward:

- The Chief Executive;
- Cllr Cathy Scott, Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Democracy Commission;
- Members of the Democracy Commission

### **5. Next steps**

In line with the Commission’s expectations the Head of Democracy will have strategic responsibility for progressing work required to deliver the intended outcomes and underpinning recommendations which will be shaped by the resolution of Council.

### **6. Officer recommendations and reasons**

Corporate Scrutiny Panel is asked to:

- Consider and note the information set out in this report;

- Consider the progress made against recommendations delegated to the Head of Democracy and in particular inform their development from a scrutiny perspective;
- Consider the wider recommendations that will be reported to Council on 15 November 2017 in order to understand the priorities and perspectives of the Corporate Scrutiny Panel.

## **7. Cabinet portfolio holder's recommendations**

That Corporate Scrutiny Panel agrees the officer recommendation.

## **8. Contact officer**

Carl Whistlecraft. Head of Democracy

[Carl.whistlecraft@kirklees.gov.uk](mailto:Carl.whistlecraft@kirklees.gov.uk)

## **9. Background Papers and History of Decisions**

All background information on the Commission's work (including formal reports, background papers, evidence and research) can be found on the [Commission's website](#).

## **10. Service Director responsible**

Jacqui Gedman, Chief Executive

### 1. Requiring further strategic steer or discussion before progressing:

#### Active citizens in civic society

- Kirklees Council should make Active Citizenship a shared strategic priority and use this as a basis for developing a new democratic relationship between Kirklees citizens and the state.

#### Councillors

- The Local Government Association (LGA) should develop a core national framework for councillors' allowances, which councils can use now as a basis for determining the rates of allowances locally.
- National government should revisit the legislation relating to councillors allowances, in light of the increased expectations now placed on the role and the tensions associated with the current approach to determining allowances.
- National government, in the context of corporate social responsibility, should address the real challenges faced by councillors who are employed.
- Kirklees Council should redesign support for councillors in a way that has a greater focus on their wards. This should enable councillors to provide better support for communities in developing effective facilities, programmes and social networks to improve people's quality of life.

#### Governance, Accountability and Decision Making

- Kirklees Council should carry out a full review of our governance and decision making arrangements. The review should be based on the issues and core design principles that are set out in the report.
- Kirklees Council should revisit our approach to consultation. We should place a greater emphasis on timely, selective citizen engagement as part of the policy development and decision-making process. We should test this on a pilot basis to begin with, and consider models of good practice from elsewhere.

#### Elections

- Kirklees Council should continue to support the innovative approaches we have developed to electoral outreach work as a means of ensuring that registration levels are maintained and continue to rise beyond the period of central government funding for Individual Electoral Registration (IER).
- National government should amend legislation to introduce the compulsory registration of young people at the age of 16.

- All schools in Kirklees should make their premises available to be used as a polling station on the day of an election.
- National government should continue to explore all options (for example, online voting, early or weekend voting and registration on polling day) to increase voter registration, accessibility and turnout.
- National government should consider the importance of local democracy when it is planning and legislating in respect of the timing and sequencing of elections. Local elections are important events and should be recognised as such. We do not wish to see a further dilution of local democracy.
- National government and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority should plan and sequence Mayoral elections for the region in a way that does not have a negative impact on local democracy.

#### Local democracy in a networked society

- Working with key partners and providers, Kirklees Council should use the learning from international examples to develop an approach for blending online and off-line engagement processes, as part of strategic planning, policy making and decision-making. This should form part of a pilot that will explore innovative approaches to planning and priority setting in a particular area of Kirklees.

#### Regional Devolution

- National government should provide clearer information about the purpose of (and processes for) regional devolution. This should:
  - Be clear about the outcomes that national government is seeking to achieve through regional devolution.
  - Provide greater clarity about the role, responsibilities and expectations of an Elected Mayor.
  - Provide greater clarity in terms of the power and responsibilities that exist at the relevant tiers of governance (region, district and local). This should involve more transparency about financial issues.
- The West Yorkshire Combined Authority should improve the quality and flow of information in order to help citizens and local councillors understand (and have better awareness of) regional issues and their relevance. This should include improving the way in which its democratic content is produced, published and communicated.
- Kirklees Council should review and improve the ways in which we support senior councillors to carry out their role in the context of the wider region. This should involve improving the information flow, in both directions, between the City Region and local areas. We should also make sure that all our councillors receive timely information about the wider regional devolution agenda.
- Kirklees Council should engage with local citizens to address the issue of local identity. Local devolution and governance are an ongoing challenge. We should be clearer about our local identity so that we can make a strong and powerful contribution to regional discussions.

- Kirklees Council should develop local approaches to strategic planning and priority setting (within different parts of Kirklees), based on the findings of our engagement work with citizens on local identity.
- Kirklees Council, together with our partners, should do some pilot work to explore innovative approaches to planning and priority setting in a particular area of Kirklees. This work should make use of some of the successful practice that the Democracy Commission have discovered as part of our work.

## **2. Requiring a councillor-led approach which would be progressed through a cross party working group:**

### Active citizens in civic society

- Kirklees Council should ensure that schools play a central role as local democratic hubs as part of the delivery of an Active Citizens Strategy. This should involve designing (and putting into practice) a range of approaches which will create pathways for young citizens to become involved in civic society, including raising awareness about being a councillor. These should include:
  - Designing local democracy resources for Kirklees schools to be used in the context of civic education.
  - Strengthening the links between local councillors and the schools in their wards through programmed “school surgeries” as part of citizenship education.
  - Working with the National Citizen Service to develop a mentoring scheme, to be piloted in Kirklees.
  - Working with the Local Government Association (LGA) to develop a young councillors apprenticeship scheme, to be piloted in Kirklees.
  - Working with the University of Huddersfield and local colleges to develop a structured approach to work placement.
  - Developing a mentoring scheme between Kirklees Councillors and Kirklees Youth Councillors.
- Kirklees Council should work with local businesses to develop the idea of “Business Citizenship” as part of delivering an Active Citizens Strategy with our partners.
- Kirklees Council should develop a strategic approach to working with the local media, one that seeks to develop a shared responsibility and understanding of the contributions that the media can make to nurturing local civic society.
- We should clarify the roles and relationships of MPs and local councillors in the context of Active Citizenship and arrange Constituency Contact Meetings annually to discuss key strategic issues for the area.

### Councillors

- Kirklees Council should use the evidence gathered by the Democracy Commission to re-define the role profile for Kirklees councillors, so that this reflects the changing and long term expectations and needs of the role. The revised profile should include core expectations, linked to ongoing performance. These should be used to demonstrate the impact that councillors are having, particularly in their wards.

- Kirklees Council should make performance evidence about what councillors do available to the public, in an easy-to-digest format.

### Local democracy in a networked society

- Kirklees Council should support all our councillors to understand and embrace digital technology. Digital literacy should be a core expectation of the councillor role. It should be part of new councillor induction and councillor development, so that we support councillors in developing their digital skills and confidence, and enable them to play an active part in explaining our decision-making processes to our citizens. Commission members should pilot this approach.

### **3. To be implemented by the Head of Democracy as part of operational service change:**

#### Councillors

- Kirklees Council should promote the role of councillor to help Kirklees citizens understand the role and to encourage citizens to come forward and stand as councillors. We should positively promote the councillor role based on the real life experiences of our councillors, and demonstrate how being a councillor can enrich a person's life.
- Kirklees Council should promote the role of councillors to staff members in a structured and ongoing way, as part of wider cultural changes both with the council and in our communities. Our staff should understand the importance of the councillor role and how it is an invaluable asset as part of changing and redesigning services.
- The Kirklees Members Allowances Independent Review Panel (MAIRP) should consider linking annual changes in the rate of councillors' allowances to the pay rate for local government officers.
- Kirklees Council should provide timely information and intelligence at a ward and neighbourhood level to support councillors and communities in working effectively.
- Kirklees Council should ensure that councillors have the correct tools to carry out the changing councillor role. This involves:
  - Building new councillor induction around the core expectations set out in the revised role profile. This should be compulsory for all new councillors but should also be open to all councillors.
  - Ensuring that any councillors who hold a position of special responsibility are fully briefed about the role, the expectations and the core knowledge required to effectively carry it out.
  - Implementing the findings of the councillor group who are currently looking at IT provision for councillors.
- Political groups (and in particular Group Leaders and Group Business Managers) should be responsible for the personal development of their members beyond what Kirklees Council can support or provide.

#### Governance, Accountability and Decision Making



- Kirklees Council, in partnership with key providers, should develop a set of democratic content standards which should be used as a basis for all content that we produce and publish as part of decision-making. These should include using clear language, helping people to understand what point we're at on the decision-making journey and making sure that our content is based on citizens' needs.
- Kirklees Council, working with political group leaders, should develop video narratives in advance of a significant issue being discussed and decided, followed by similar narratives once a decision has been taken. This should include independent reporting from citizen journalists.
- Kirklees Council should organise quarterly question time events involving all group leaders. The content and agenda for these events will be set by the citizens of Kirklees. The events will be broadcast and allow the facility for questions to be taken online as well as in person.
- Kirklees Council should develop online and off-line interpretive information for the public relating to all of our public meetings. Such information can be used at meetings but can also be part of wider civic awareness about the council and our democratic processes.
- Kirklees Council should now take the opportunity to fully explore and implement the full capability of our webcasting technology, beyond purely broadcasting meetings. Taking advantage of the interactive technology that currently exists should be a priority.

### Elections

- Kirklees Council should work collaboratively with schools to develop an optional local approach to registering young people at the age of 16.
- Kirklees Council should work with the University of Huddersfield and local colleges to integrate electoral registration as part of the existing student registration process.
- Kirklees Council should work in partnership with Democracy Club to pilot the ways in which data can be used to increase voter awareness and engagement. The learning should be used to develop a national standard that all councils should aspire to achieving.
- Kirklees Council should improve access to voter information by making polling districts and polling station data available to Democracy Club, in a format that meets their GoldPlus technical standard, in addition to sharing other essential elections data in recommended formats (candidates and election results).

### Local democracy in a networked society

- Kirklees Council should review our approach to creating and sharing democratic content. This should involve exploring different and innovative ways of developing content to facilitate dialogue and engagement before, during and after the formal decision-making process.
- Working with key providers, Kirklees Council should develop a democratic digital literacy pilot as part of a wider civic education programme for young citizens.
- Kirklees Council should provide our councillors with a live social media audit that provides details of social media use, online networks and connectivity for the ward they represent.

- Kirklees Council should provide our councillors with the appropriate IT hardware that they need to be effective in their role.