

Name of meeting: Council

Date: Wednesday 15 November 2017

Title of report: Kirklees Democracy Commission – Recommendations and Next Steps

Purpose of report

To allow Council the opportunity to discuss, and as determined amend, the recommendations of the Kirklees Democracy Commission. The outcome of this discussion will form a clearer mandate for the next phases of the work.

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?	Not applicable
Key Decision - Is it in the Council's Forward Plan (key decisions and private reports?)	Not applicable
The Decision - Is it eligible for call in by Scrutiny?	No
Date signed off by <u>Strategic Director</u> & name	Jacqui Gedman, Chief Executive
Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Finance IT and Transactional Services?	Not applicable
Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Legal Governance and Commissioning Support?	Not applicable
Cabinet member portfolio	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.

Public or private: Public

1. Summary

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

It is very important to note that Council resolved to “note and welcome” the report and its findings. This in part explains why this report is being put before Council

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 a series of high level outcomes have been developed and the relevant recommendations have been placed alongside those outcomes. Full details are set out at Appendix 1 to this report.

Council is asked to discuss (and as determined amend) the recommendations of the Kirklees Democracy Commission with a view to thereafter agreeing and providing a clear mandate for the next phases of the work.

2. Information required to take a decision

Since the report launch work has taken place to consider the Commission's recommendations with a view to determining a way forward in terms of next steps. As part of this process the Chief Executive consulted with Leading Members at their meeting on 18 July 2017. As a result a number of recommendations have been identified that should be implemented by the Head of Democracy as part of operational service change and delivery. These have therefore not been included in this report.

The remainder of the recommendations require a further strategic steer or they require a councillor-led approach. It is for these reasons that, on balance, it was felt appropriate to bring those recommendations back to Council with a view to gaining clarity in terms of a mandate for future work.

In order to assist this process work has taken place to develop a number of high level outcomes which are derived from the themes in the Commission's report. The relevant recommendations have been placed under the respective outcome(s). This information is captured at Appendix 1.

In order to move progress Council is now asked to consider the high level outcomes and underpinning recommendations with a view to determining the way forward. It is important that there is agreement and clarity as to the next steps. The recommendations set out in the report have been developed with this in mind.

If Council is minded to move progress we 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 placed-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.

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

3.5 Other (eg Legal/Financial or Human Resources)

To be determined following the outcome of the Council discussion

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.

Group Leaders, and their political groups, have been given the opportunity to consider the Commission's recommendations in order to facilitate the discussion at Council. Discussion with group leaders took place on 1st and 7th of November.

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 namely Dr Andy Mycock and Councillors Marchington, Cooper, Wilson, Palfreeman, Loonat and E Firth

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. Where such recommendations require constitutional changes there will be opportunities for Council to consider these matters as part of future business.

6. Officer recommendations and reasons

Council is asked to:

- Consider and agree (or amend as appropriate) the strategic outcomes and underpinning recommendations set out at Appendix 1 to this report which will form the basis of a mandate for future work;
- Agree to the creation of a cross party working group (with a ratio of 2:1:1:1) to facilitate delivery of future work;
- Agree that the Head of Democracy, in accordance with the Commission's expectations, has strategic responsibility for progressing the work required to deliver the intended outcomes and underpinning recommendations.

7. Cabinet portfolio holder's recommendations

That Council agree the officer recommendation.

8. Contact officer

Carl Whistlecraft. Head of Democracy
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

Outcome A:

Active citizens have a stake in the place they live and are able to inform and influence the future of their community and the decisions affecting it;

Outcome B:

Young citizens are interested and have the opportunity to be engaged in local democracy;

Relevant Commission Recommendations:

1. 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;
2. 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 councillor 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;
3. 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;
4. 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.

Outcome C:

Councillors have the confidence, skills, support and capacity to lead the changing relationship between the council and local citizens. They are placed at the heart of the Council;

Outcome D:

The councillor role is clear, widely communicated and universally understood;

Outcome E:

Councillors are accessible and confident in their role in a digitally networked society;

Relevant Commission Recommendations:

5. 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;
6. 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;
7. National government, in the context of corporate social responsibility, should address the real challenges faced by councillors who are employed;
8. 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;
9. 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;
10. Kirklees Council should make performance evidence about what councillors do available to the public, in an easy-to-digest format;
11. 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;
12. 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 make sure that all our councillors receive timely information about the regional devolution agenda;

Outcome F:

Decision making is built around the needs of the citizen; it is open, engaging, based on dialogue and has effective checks and balances; any arrangements should safeguard the health and reputation of the council;

Outcome G:

Council meetings are open, accessible and engaging for citizens and councillors alike;

Outcome H:

Democratic content is accessible, digestible and delivered in a way that considers the needs of the citizen and councillors alike;

Outcome I:

Citizens and councillors understand how decisions are made and have an opportunity to be engaged throughout the process wherever possible;

Relevant Commission Recommendations:

13. 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:
14. 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:
15. 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.

Outcome J:

Registering to vote should be easy, accessible and convenient especially for our young citizens;

Outcome K:

Citizens are able to access accurate, timely, trustworthy and relevant information about elections and candidates standing;

Relevant Commission Recommendations:

16. 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);
17. National government should amend legislation to introduce the compulsory registration of young people at the age of 16;
18. National government should lower the voting age to 16 and agree that such arrangements be piloted in Kirklees in order to fully evaluate the benefits and implications.
19. All schools in Kirklees should make their premises available to be used as a polling station on the day of an election;
20. 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;
21. 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;
22. 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.

Outcome L:

Our approach to local devolution is from the ground up, based on local identity and the specific priorities of our towns, villages and communities;

Outcome M:

Citizens and councillors understand the opportunities and implications of regional devolution;

23. 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.

24. 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;

25. 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;

26. 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;

27. 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.