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KIRKLEES COUNCIL

ECONOMY AND NEIGHBOURHOODS SCRUTINY PANEL

Thursday 19th July 2018

Present: Councillor Rob Walker (Chair)
Councillor Bill Armer
Councillor Judith Hughes
Councillor Richard Murgatroyd
Councillor Harpreet Uppal

Co-optees Mark Mercer

In attendance: Councillor Naheed Mather Cabinet Member for
Communities and Environment
Councillor Peter McBride Cabinet Member for Economy
Councillor Cathy Scott Cabinet Member for Adults and
Independence

Karl Battersby, Strategic Director of Economy and
Infrastructure
Helen Geldart, Head of Housing Services
Cath McGurk, Operations Manager (Access to Housing)
Karen Oates, Commissioning Manager (Access to
housing)

Apologies: Councillor Martyn Bolt

1 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Cllr Walker highlighted the transport issues and outlined the work that had been undertaken looking at rail services within the Council and outside.

Cllr Walker explained that he hadn't had an opportunity to follow up on matters relating to bus services and proposed that a brief update on bus services be submitted to the Panel at a future date.

The Panel highlighted a number of areas where further information was still required that included: details of the profile of homeless and rough sleepers; details of the impact of universal credit and the minutes from the Tackling Poverty Working Group; and contact details for all councillors to refer cases involving domestic violence.

Cllr Walker confirmed that the issue relating to domestic violence would be picked up by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee.

2 Interests

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No interests were declared.

3 Admission of the Public

That all items be considered in public session.

4 Setting the Work Programme for 2018/19

The Panel welcomed Councillor Naheed Mather Cabinet Member for Communities and Environment, Councillor Peter McBride Cabinet Member for Economy, Councillor Cathy Scott Cabinet Member for Adults and Independence and Karl Battersby, Strategic Director of Economy to the meeting.

Mr Battersby commented on the items that had been put forward for inclusion in the work programme for 2018/19 and explained that housing was a huge priority and would support the Council's aspiration for growth and it seemed right that this should be an area of focus for scrutiny.

Mr Battersby informed the Panel of the work that was due to be undertaken to regenerate areas of Kirklees with a focus on Dewsbury and Huddersfield.

Mr Battersby stated that the Kirklees Economic Strategy required a refresh and would welcome the views of the Panel before it was finalised.

The Panel heard that developing skills in Kirklees was a key element in helping to support the Kirklees economy and the input of the Panel in this area of work would also be welcomed.

Mr Battersby stated that waste and cleansing services were key areas for the Council with a particular focus on looking at ways to improve the environment and recycling rates.

Mr Battersby stated that the waste PFI contract was due to expire in 2023 and with the challenges that the Council faced on service delivery and low recycling rates there would be need to be a focus how to involve the public in waste minimisation and recycling.

Cllr Walker informed the Panel of three other areas of work that the Panel would need to consider for inclusion in the work programme that included the Clean Air Strategy; the Green Space Strategy; and the implications to the Council following the publication of the Hackitt report on fire safety.

Cllr McBride informed the Panel that the Council's priorities in relation to skills were being developed and explained that the Council was also looking to develop a strategy based on the implementation of the Local Plan.

Cllr McBride explained that a strategy was being developed on what land was available to the Council now and would include planning for houses and industry and there would also be links to the West Yorks Combined Authority West Yorkshire Transport Scheme.

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Cllr McBride informed the Panel of the plans by the Department for Transport to invest in the TransPennine rail infrastructure which would include major investment in Kirklees.

Cllr Walker invited comment from the Panel and attendees on the work programme items that covered a number of issues that included:

- The challenges of attracting shoppers into Huddersfield Town Centre.
- A suggestion that the Panel include in its work programme a focus on developing markets and smaller traders.
- A proposal that the Panel looked at community wealth building initiatives and test them to check if they worked.
- A suggestion that the Council set up a working group to look at the recommendations of the Hackitt report and review the implications for the Council.
- Confirmation that the Council had allocated in its budget funds for sprinkler systems to be installed in the Council's high rise buildings.
- A discussion on setting up a working group to look at the Hackitt report.
- The importance of involving local communities and other key stakeholders in the town centre works.
- A need to relook at the town centre model.
- The long term approach to the development of the town centres.
- The plans to invest in the town centres.
- The challenges of dealing with absent landlords.
- The work being done on heritage buildings.
- A discussion on scrutiny's role in looking at the methodology being used to engage with the community on the Council's approach to investing in towns and villages across Kirklees.
- The importance of reversing the culture of negativity regarding the town centres.
- The role of the Council in acting as a catalyst to encourage investment in the town centres.
- The changing face of town centres and the increase in the numbers of people residing in town centres.
- The plans for developing key listed buildings across the town centre.
- A concern over the high levels of student accommodation in Huddersfield Town Centre.
- The potential for longer term investment in developing residential properties in the town centres for professionals wanting to commute to Manchester and Leeds.

Cllr Mather informed the Panel of the work that was being done with partners on air quality that included a focus on the Council setting an example in operating and promoting a cleaner working environment.

Cllr Mather stated that the Council was revising its open and green space strategy and the focus would be on biodiversity and managed spaces.

Cllr Mather explained that the Council would be remodelling the maintenance schemes for the Council's parks and open spaces and would take on board health and wellbeing.

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Cllr Mather outlined details of the Council's vision to increase recycling rates by introducing initiatives that would encourage and change lifestyles and behaviours.

Cllr Mather highlighted the significant investment that would be required to provide modern recycling plants and explained the work that was being done in preparation for when the current waste contract expired.

Cllr Mather outlined the initiatives that the Council had introduced to minimise waste which included introducing recyclable tea and coffee cups and working with local manufacturers and retailers on increasing single use plastics.

A further discussion took place that covered a number of issues that included:

- The impact of the introduction of Leeds clean air zone on Kirklees residents.
- A concern regarding the challenges for less well-off residents in accessing charging points and managing the costs of charging electric cars.
- Issues of fly tipping, enforcement, the impact of green space in urban areas and schemes encouraging green commuting.
- Looking at ways of reducing big polluters such as buses.
- Including in the clean air strategy school transport and how children travel to school.
- The importance of reducing congestion to improve air quality.
- How the planned improvements to key transport routes would help support the air quality agenda.
- Within the waste agenda a suggestion that scrutiny could add real value by focusing on changing people's behaviour in recycling and littering to include education and enforcement.

Cllr Walker outlined the key areas of the work programme and outlined a proposed schedule for covering each item.

RESOLVED –

(1) That the Cabinet members for Communities and Environment, Economy, Adults and Independence and the Strategic Director for Economy and Infrastructure be thanked for attending the meeting.

(2) That the Panel's Work Programme as presented be agreed subject to taking account of the comments and suggestions put forward by the Panel and attendees.

(3) That the following items be added to the Work Programme:

- Green Space
- Air Quality

5

Draft Housing Strategy and Allocations Policy

Cllr Scott informed the Panel that there was a wide ranging need for housing across the district and explained that the Council would need to be innovative and look at new ways of doing things.

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Cllr Scott stated that the Council was unable to meet the demand on its own and would need to broaden its horizons and work in partnership with other organisations to encourage development in Kirklees.

Cllr Scott referenced a chart that showed the range of housing offers required to meet the changing needs and income of Kirklees households and explained the different levels of affordable housing.

Cllr Scott stated that she would welcome scrutiny's input into the draft strategy and would take on board comments from the Panel.

A question and answer session followed that covered a number of areas that included:

- The need for more housing designed to cater for the needs of the older population in Kirklees.
- The Council strategy to release council owned land for the development of properties to meet the needs of older people.
- The challenges associated with development in rural areas.
- The focus in the Strategy of enabling people to remain in their own home including supporting the adaption of properties.
- The importance of looking at the Strategy in the context of the Local Plan.
- The option to develop affordable housing to meet the needs of the local community.
- The requirement to prove to the inspector of the local plan that the Council could provide the required infrastructure to support the development proposals.
- The challenges of providing sufficient health provision to service the needs of the growing Kirklees population.
- An explanation of how the Council would meet its housing targets.
- A suggestion to develop a more robust definition of what was meant by affordable housing that could be more easily quantified.
- The challenges of land banking.
- The national definition of affordable housing.
- The focus in the Strategy of relating affordable housing to the local context.
- The ongoing monitoring of the delivery of the local plan and the inclusion in the analysis of the house hold projection figures.
- A discussion on the trajectory for building houses in Kirklees to meet the local housing need.
- The challenging aspirational target of building 10,000 homes over the next 5 years.
- An explanation of the plans to refresh the private landlord accreditation scheme.
- The need to ensure that the accreditation scheme was properly policed.
- The importance of having a robust mechanism to allow people to report their concerns on substandard housing.
- The work that was being planned to improve the standard of housing in both the private landlord sector and social housing through the implementation of the Kirklees Quality Standards.

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- A discussion on the various approaches that the Council could take to improve the standard of housing that included incentivising landlords, the use of enforcement and empowering tenants.
- A question on the significance of land banking in Kirklees.
- The impact and the challenges of the homeless reduction act and the benefits of the Kirklees housing first model.
- The plans of one authority to lobby government on land banking with a proposal that developers who have planning permission and do not proceed with developments are required to pay the council tax they would have done based on the permitted planned housing schedule.

A discussion on the Housing Allocations Policy took place that covered a number of points that included:

- A discussion on the Council's Open Age Policy that was agreed in 2012.
- An explanation of the Local Lettings Framework and Plan which was able to be used where there were clashes of lifestyle or significant issues with anti-social behaviour in order to better manage an area of accommodation.
- Confirmation that following the Panel's previous comments on the Local Lettings Framework it had been agreed to review the policy.
- An agreement that scrutiny could be involved in the review.
- The importance of ensuring there was an adequate support for young people coming out of care.

RESOLVED –

(1) That consideration be given to establishing a scrutiny ad hoc review to look at the implications for the Council following the publication of the Hackitt report "Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety".

(2) That on behalf of the Panel Cllr Hughes and Armer join the council working group that will be undertaking a review of the Open Age Policy and Local Letting Framework.

6 Overview and Scrutiny in 2018/19

The Panel noted the guide to the approach to Overview and Scrutiny in Kirklees 2018/19 and the role of scrutiny panel Lead Members.

RESOLVED – That the guides outlining the planned approach to overview and scrutiny in Kirklees and the role of the Scrutiny Panel Lead Members be noted.

7 Dates of Meetings for 2018/19

RESOLVED -

That the Panel's meeting dates for 2018/19 be as follows:

Wednesday 5 September 2018 (2:00 pm)
Wednesday 10 October 2018 (10:00 am)
Wednesday 7 November 2018 (10:00 am)
Wednesday 12 December 2018 (10:00 am)
Thursday 17 January 2019 (2:00 pm)
Thursday 14 February 2019 (2:00 pm)

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Thursday 21 March 2019 (2:00 pm)