

Contact Officer: Sheila Dykes

KIRKLEES COUNCIL

ECONOMY AND NEIGHBOURHOODS SCRUTINY PANEL

Thursday 21st March 2019

- Present: Councillor Rob Walker (Chair)
Councillor Martyn Bolt
Councillor Judith Hughes
Councillor Richard Murgatroyd
Councillor Harpreet Uppal
- In attendance: Councillor Peter McBride – Cabinet Member, Economy
Councillor Naheed Mather – Cabinet Member,
Communities and Environment
Karl Battersby – Strategic Director Economy and
Infrastructure
Helen Geldart – Head of Housing Services
Adele Buckley - Head of Housing Growth and
Regeneration
Richard Hollinson - Policy Group Leader, Planning
Services
Martin Wood – Operational Manager, Public Protection
Lucy Wearmouth – Health Improvement Practitioner
Advanced, Public Health
Wendy Blakeley – Head of Public Protection
- Apologies: Councillor Bill Armer
Councillor Musarrat Khan – Cabinet Member, Health and
Social Care
Councillor Cathy Scott – Cabinet Member, Housing and
Democracy
Andrew Bird
Mark Mercer

1 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 14 February 2019 were agreed as a correct record.

Matters arising:-

- There was a need to consider the Authority's preparations for Brexit, notwithstanding that the picture may still be unclear, and an item should be placed on the agenda for the first meeting of the new municipal year. Karl Battersby, Strategic Director, Economy and Infrastructure assured the Panel that work was ongoing, both at a local and regional level, and he considered that the organisation was relatively well prepared despite the uncertainties.

Economy and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Panel - 21 March 2019

- The information sessions held for Councillors in respect of the Huddersfield Town Centre Masterplan had been very useful. It was noted that, subject to its publication date, it was intended that consideration be given to the Masterplan, and the way forward in terms of scrutiny, at the first meeting of the Panel in 2019/20.

- It was considered that the Digital Strategy should be retained on the Panel's Work Programme for next year, not just in terms of monitoring progress with the physical infrastructure and the work being undertaken with businesses and in developing appropriate skills, but also to ensure that the advantages it would bring to the district were promoted.

2 Interests

No interests were declared.

3 Admission of the Public

It was agreed that all agenda items would be considered in public session.

4 Housing Strategy Implementation

Helen Geldart, Head of Housing Services presented the report and Richard Hollinson, Policy Group Leader, Planning Services and Adele Buckley, Head of Housing Growth and Regeneration, were also in attendance to answer Members' questions.

Key points from the Panel's discussion and responses to questions were as follows:

- Rough sleeping was a complex issue; the numbers at any one time could vary considerably and it was not necessarily the case that an individual did not have a place to go. The duty was to support individuals to secure accommodation rather than a duty to provide accommodation.

- Pro-active work was being undertaken to assess the need for additional hostel accommodation, particularly in North Kirklees.

- There was a requirement under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 for certain public agencies to refer individuals, with no accommodation, to the Housing Authority at an early stage. Relationships with these agencies were being strengthened to ensure that information was received in a timely manner. Helen undertook to send the list of the relevant bodies concerned to Members.

- The reasons for people not accepting support varied from case to case; workers did try to engage with individuals and encourage them to do so.

- The Allocations Policy did give priority to former military personnel.

- There were some female rough sleepers in Kirklees but they were a minority.

- A successful bid to the Government Life Chances Fund had resulted in the award of significant funding and a new Kirklees Integrated Support Service was anticipated

Economy and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Panel - 21 March 2019

to launch in Summer 2019. More information on this initiative would be provided for Members as it became available.

- Helen undertook to send a link to Members in respect of the ongoing work in terms of re-thinking the way homes are allocated, which was being led by the Chartered Institute for Housing.

- Work had started on the 'Quality Places' Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which would sit under the Local Plan and alongside recent changes to the National Planning Practice Framework and National Planning Practice Guidance. This policy framework would give the Authority a remit to push forward on matters such as the use of energy efficiency measures in new homes, although it had to be recognised that there would be a balance to be achieved in terms of viability. Work would be undertaken to explore how such requirements might be stipulated, in particular, for the development of Council owned sites.

- It was considered that there could be opportunities for Kirklees, not only in terms of improving housing quality but also in the development of the green economy, through utilising existing specialist knowledge of green construction methods to train others.

- No detailed proposals were available at this point for the 'Waterfront' site and these would be subject to consideration by the relevant Planning Committee in due course.

- It was accepted that it was important that a partnership approach was taken in developing Neighbourhood Plans and that information on developing policy was shared.

- There were currently no selective landlord licensing schemes in Kirklees and it was not considered that there were any areas where the introduction of these was necessary. Action was taken to support private sector landlords to ensure that there were no health and safety issues associated with their properties and the Council did use its enforcement powers when it became necessary to do so.

- The Rogue Landlord Enforcement Grant funding had been a small amount which had facilitated additional staffing to undertake a programme of inspections, in a number of targeted areas, of properties adjacent to or above commercial premises. Action plans would then be developed to be taken forward in those areas. The learning from this work would also be rolled out to other areas. Where a property had not been accessed contact information would be left and follow up visits did take place if there were any concerns.

- A masterplan would be drawn up for the Bradley development site and Ward Councillors would help to shape this, alongside statutory consultees. This would include Metro who would be asked to look at how the bus network could be integrated into the development. There were limits on the Local Authority's ability to impose requirements in terms of public transport but potential initiatives could include the provision of real time information at bus stops.

Economy and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Panel - 21 March 2019

- The issue of reducing reliance on cars linked in with planning new development, public transport provision and air quality issues and this was a potential area for further consideration.
- The Local Plan contained a Masterplan Policy and an Infrastructure Planning Policy which meant that the Authority was setting out, at an early stage, what it would expect to see in schemes for new development and its expectations in respect of public engagement.
- Work was being undertaken within the Transportation Service in terms of transport strategy, links with land use and housing development and planning of infrastructure, and information on this could be brought back to the Panel.

RESOLVED –

(1) That the Strategic Director, Economy and Infrastructure, the Head of Housing Services, the Head of Housing Growth and Regeneration and the Policy Group Leader, Development Management be thanked for attending the meeting and that the progress made to date be welcomed.

(2) That the following be noted as potential issues for consideration for inclusion in the Panel's future work programme:

(i) Possible opportunities arising, from housing quality requirements, for development of the green economy in Kirklees by using the existing knowledge of relevant construction skills in the district; which links into both the Housing Strategy and the Economic Strategy

(ii) How bus service provision links in with the Local Plan, the planning system, new development and air quality issues.

5

Air Quality Strategy

Martin Wood, Operational Manager, Public Protection and Lucy Wearmouth, Health Improvement Practitioner Advanced, Public Health gave a comprehensive presentation which highlighted that air quality was a multi-faceted issue that involved working with colleagues across many different services/areas of the Council whilst recognising that this was not an issue that the Council could address on its own.

Key points from the Panel's discussion and responses to questions were as follows:

- In terms of the distinction between the issues of climate change and air quality it was acknowledged that there may be some confusion in the public perception. Officers were aware of this but did have to comply with the relevant legislative framework. Work was being undertaken with colleagues to present one picture to the public about active travel, emission reduction, health impacts etc under the banner 'clean and green'. It was hoped to promote awareness within local communities that small changes could make a difference.

Economy and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Panel - 21 March 2019

- The new strategy provided a clear commitment to looking at air quality in an embedded way and it was anticipated that it would seem much more integrated to the public and the link to overall health and wellbeing would be clearer.
- A recent Government announcement of funding for the promotion of walking and cycling measures, which made specific reference to the existing network in Kirklees was discussed. It was suggested that walking and cycling might be a topic that the Panel could scrutinise in more depth at a later date, perhaps with input from user groups and schools.
- The Action Plan was a significant undertaking and it was considered important to take the necessary time to ensure that it was of the highest quality before it was submitted. The Government had permitted an extension of time until April and there was the possibility of this being extended further if necessary.
- It was noted that partnership work on improving air quality was ongoing both internally and with external organisations.
- There was a policy within the Local Plan on air quality and Supplementary Planning Guidance would aim for the achievement of good urban planning; officers would work hard on all proposals for new development to mitigate/minimise the impacts of its delivery in terms of air quality.
- Information was requested in relation to how the Council's fleet of electric vehicles compared to its neighbours.
- There was a good spread of approximately twenty electric vehicle charging points across the district. The issue of the provision of charging points for terraced housing was complex and work was ongoing on how this might be resolved.
- There were basic shower facilities for staff using bikes and it was hoped to improve these as part of the Bike Friendly Business grant funding.
- Public Health had a good relationship with colleagues from the Planning Service and it was hoped that this would help in influencing decisions.
- In terms of planning physical infrastructure, an example was given of work that was being undertaken on improvements to a walking/cycling route between Bradley and Brighouse, alongside colleagues from Calderdale, and the aim was to engage with the local community to ensure that it was well used.

RESOLVED –

(1) That the Operational Manager and the Health Improvement Practitioner Advanced be thanked for their attendance and the interesting and informative presentation and that the internal partnership working that is being developed be welcomed.

Economy and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Panel - 21 March 2019

(2) That Air Quality be retained on the Panel's Work Programme as an important issue that touches on many areas of work within the Panel's remit, with the specific elements identified by Members at the meeting being noted for future consideration.

- 6** **Review of 2018/19 Work Programme**
That the draft Work Programme for 2019/20 be drawn up in line with Members' comments.