

Contact Officer: Sheila Dykes

## KIRKLEES COUNCIL

### ECONOMY AND NEIGHBOURHOODS SCRUTINY PANEL

**Wednesday 17th July 2019**

Present: Councillor Harpreet Uppal (Chair)  
Councillor Martyn Bolt  
Councillor Richard Eastwood  
Councillor Yusra Hussain  
Councillor Richard Murgatroyd  
Councillor John Taylor

Co-optees Chris Friend  
Eilidh Ogden

In attendance: Councillor Naheed Mather – Portfolio Holder for Greener Kirklees  
Councillor Peter McBride – Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Regeneration  
Councillor Graham Turner - Portfolio Holder for Corporate  
Councillor Rob Walker - Portfolio Holder for Culture and Environment  
David Bundy – Corporate Policy Officer  
Naz Parkar –Service Director for Housing, Economy and Infrastructure  
Jo Scrutton – Principal Planning Officer  
Simon Taylor – Head of Development and Master Planning  
Sean Westerby – Emergency Planning and Business Continuity Manager

Observers: Vaneeza Ahsan – Kirklees Youth Council  
Tahiba Hussain – Huddersfield University  
Michelle Ross  
Waris Slahuddin – Kirklees Youth Council  
Phoebe Munro

Apologies: Andrew Bird (Co-Optee)

**1 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 21st March 2019 be approved as a correct record.

**2 Interests**

No interests were declared.

**3 Admission of the Public**

That all agenda items be considered in public session.

**4 Deputations/Petitions**

No deputations or petitions were received.

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### **5 Public Question Time**

No questions were asked.

### **6 Huddersfield Town Centre Blue Print - Background Data, Vision and Engagement**

Simon Taylor, the Head of Development and Master Planning presented a report in relation to the Huddersfield Blueprint which set out three key elements for discussion:

- Background data on Huddersfield Town Centre and the national context.
- The objectives of the Blueprint.
- The engagement and consultation process, including:
  - background on engagement undertaken to date in development of the master plan.
  - details of the engagement process now being undertaken and timescale.
  - the process after the consultation has concluded.

Simon explained that the Blueprint aimed to facilitate the provision of a wide variety of uses within an accessible town centre. This would include a cultural heart, leisure opportunities, a vibrant evening/night-time offer, new residential provision, thriving businesses, high quality public spaces and a reinvigorated market.

He detailed the various approaches being taken towards consultation and engagement on the Blueprint. In late 2018 and early 2019 a series of workshops had been undertaken with town centre stakeholders, technical officers from various Council services and Members. The Blueprint had been launched on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2019, and the engagement would run until at least the end of September 2019. Currently this was being undertaken through face to face interviews using the Place Standard Tool, dedicated web pages, an online questionnaire, the Blueprint Shop in the Piazza and targeted focus groups. He also pointed out that further focussed consultations would take place as individual schemes came forward for implementation.

In response to questions from Panel Members, Simon explained that some local authorities did not collect data in respect of town centre vacancy rates, however it should be possible to provide information in relation to comparable northern towns to Members after the meeting. He also undertook to provide some more detailed information/data in respect of; examples of thriving town centres; any identified causes of particularly significant footfall decline; and ownership of vacant town centre properties.

The Panel discussed the importance of strong and reliable public transport links that were attractive to use, particularly in light of the desire to reduce the number of vehicles within the town centre. Councillor McBride stated that accessibility of the town centre was recognised as a key issue. He noted that the bus station and railway station were already very well used and that the view had been expressed by the Chair of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) Transport Committee that Huddersfield's accessibility by private transport was good.

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It was suggested that further information should be provided to indicate those parts of the district where people were travelling to the town centre by bus; and how it was proposed to make public transport more attractive as a travel option.

The view was expressed that the Council should ensure that the facilities for cyclists, such as the town centre lockers, were in good condition and it was noted that electric bicycles were growing in popularity but currently there were no charging points.

In response to further questions, Simon explained that a parking study was ongoing covering both Huddersfield and Dewsbury. This would provide quality data to assist in developing the future approach which could include plans for the introduction of electric charging points.

Members discussed the following issues:

- The need for the environmental impacts of the proposals to be fully considered, including the potential for re-use/recycling of existing buildings, and also for climate change issues to be addressed within the consultation process.
- The consultation process needed to be completely inclusive and should involve those people who did not currently use the town centre as well as those who did. The Place Standard was a powerful tool but there was a need to be careful in this context to ensure that the questions being asked were clearly defined.
- It was questioned how achievement of the objectives would be measured and how it was anticipated that these proposals make a difference in attracting people into Huddersfield.

Simon undertook to look at engagement with relevant groups in terms of climate change/environmental impacts and Councillor McBride said that he considered that the measures being taken in respect of traffic management and public transport would have a positive impact.

In terms of attracting visitors to the town centre, Simon explained that the aim was to create a unique offer for Huddersfield centred around a cultural heart and including a new park, a better library, a new museum, a recreated market offer and a 'sound space'/music venue. New living and working opportunities would be created and there would be a variety of uses so the town centre was not dominated by retail.

Councillor Walker said that it was recognised that the cultural quarter/offer needed to be relevant to, and focussed on, the local community as this would assist its sustainability over the long term; local people would be involved in the development of this element of the scheme.

Simon assured the Panel that face to face interviews, using the Place Standard tool, would be undertaken in as many locations as possible. He said that he would give consideration to reaching those people who did not already actively use the town centre and asked Members to contact him with any additional suggestions to add to the list of consultees. It was explained that the shop was also proving to be a useful

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resource and had already resulted in additional focus groups and network connections being established.

Members of Kirklees Youth Council were welcomed to the meeting and were invited to make the following contributions:

- Inspiration should be taken from regeneration initiatives in other local town centres such as Halifax and Bradford. Huddersfield had a lot of potential that was not being used.
- Bus use needed to be made more attractive to young people; taxis were preferred despite the cost, this also had an environmental impact.

Councillor McBride said that the WYCA was considering ways to subsidise the use of public transport for young people.

Panel members commented that:

- There was a need for Huddersfield to have a recognisable brand and for the proposals to be both innovative and future proofed.
- Careful consideration was needed in relation to the potential impact on the other, smaller, local centres.
- Information on the percentage of short journeys into the town centre would be useful to analyse how many of these would be easily undertaken by bike and why people were not choosing to do so.

Simon explained that the Huddersfield BID (Business Improvement District) Group would be working with the authority to develop branding. A lot of the local centres were considered to be strong and vibrant and the issue of any impact on them from these proposals would be an important consideration moving forward.

### **RESOLVED -**

(1) That the Head of Development and Master Planning be requested to:

(a) where possible, provide further information to members of the Panel, prior to the next meeting, in respect of:

- Statistics to allow comparison with northern towns including Batley and Dewsbury.
- Case studies of town centres that are thriving.
- Any identifiable reasons for particularly significant reductions in high street footfall.
- The percentage of vacant properties in the town centre that are in private/Council ownership.
- Data in respect of people using bus services to access the town centre in terms of which part of the district they are travelling from.
- Statistics in respect of the percentage of journeys into the town centre that are under 2 miles and how cycling and walking can be made easier/encouraged.

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- Data on the demand and existing capacity within town centre car parks (it being noted that a Dewsbury/Huddersfield Parking Study was currently ongoing).
- The town centre cycle lockers.

(b) Include information in future reports to the Panel in relation to:

- What is proposed to try and make public transport more attractive as an option for people to access the town centre.
- An assessment of the potential impact on other town centres in the district.
- An assessment of the environmental impact of the proposals.

(2) That Members inform the Head of Development and Master Planning of any additional groups/organisations that they consider should be engaged in the consultation process.

### **7 Leaving the EU Preparations**

The report provided a position statement on the current situation regarding Kirklees' preparations, as the UK prepared to leave the European Union (EU). The information was provided within the context of the UK being granted an extension of the Article 50 process meaning that the official leave date was now 31 October 2019. The UK could leave before this date if the withdrawal agreement was ratified by the UK and the EU beforehand.

In response to questions from Members, Naz Parkar - Service Director for Housing, Economy and Infrastructure, David Bundy – Corporate Policy Officer and Sean Westerby - Emergency Planning and Business Continuity Officer explained that:

- The Council had engaged with the Chamber of Commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses together with smaller and micro businesses, including market traders, in relation to preparation for the potential impact both in the short and longer term. Consideration was being given to how small businesses might be better supported.
- The Communications and Marketing Team would be assisting in respect of the information available on the website.
- The potential opportunities for the district and regionally/nationally, for example in terms of new trading partnerships, were beginning to be established; there was lot of work to be done on this issue going forward.
- In respect of categorising risk, at the present time this was difficult due to the rapidly changing scenarios but risk could be addressed in future reports.
- In terms of labour markets, impact assessments had been undertaken in key sectors such as care services and the construction industry and work was being undertaken with colleges/the University to plan for the longer term.
- The issue of Council representation/connections with EU bodies should be given consideration, this might include how the Council could work with the area's MEPs in the future.
- The £210,000 funding allocated to Kirklees had not been used at this point, the Emergency Planning Team had been used as the core base for this work.

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- The Council had a strategic risk reserve to enable it to deal with shock impacts, such as a sudden loss in the value of the pound, a rise in tender prices or an increase in interest rates,
- There had been work undertaken via the Communities Team and Council employees to try and ensure that EU residents were aware of the implications and were supported through the process.
- Testing of some key service areas such as school meals had been undertaken locally but, at this stage, there were so many unknown elements that only broad questions could be addressed.

**RESOLVED** – That it be noted that the Corporate Scrutiny Panel will be taking the lead on this matter but that any specific issues affecting the local economy may be submitted for consideration by this Panel in due course.

### **8 Work Programme 2019/20**

The Panel discussed its Work Programme for 2019/20. In addition to those items already listed, Members proposed the following:

- Progress in relation to the supporting policies for the Local Plan
- Section 106 Legal Agreements/ Implementation of Community Infrastructure Levy including administrative processes.
- Feedback on Ward Based Squads; their remit and their success/impact.

It was also requested that the matters set out below be added to the existing issues:

- Digital Strategy  
*Impact/support for more rural areas.*
- Economic Strategy  
*Alternative sources of finance for environmental issues/alternative energy use  
Wealth building and inclusive growth strategy and how this aligns with the  
climate change agenda.*
- Towns and Communities in Kirklees  
*Smaller towns within the district.*
- Housing  
*Relationship with KNH  
Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy - review to see how Kirklees is  
performing against targets*
- Waste Strategy  
*Business waste and single use plastics*
- Strategy/policy development around cycling

Councillor Uppal noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee would take an overview of all the Scrutiny Panels' Work Programmes.

**RESOLVED** - That the amendments/additions to the Work Programme for 2019/20, as proposed by Members of the Panel, be reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee at its meeting on 22nd July 2019.

### **9 Dates of Meetings 2019/20**

That meetings of the Panel for the 2019/20 municipal year be agreed as follows:

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- Thursday 19th September 2019 at 2.00pm
- Thursday 10th October 2019 at 2.00pm
- Thursday 14th November 2019 at 2.00pm
- Thursday 5th December 2019 at 2.00pm
- Thursday 16th January 2020 at 2.00pm
- Thursday 5th March 2020 at 2.00pm
- Thursday 2nd April 2020 at 2.00pm