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KIRKLEES COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Thursday 29th October 2020

Present: Councillor Elizabeth Smaje (Chair)
Councillor Andrew Cooper
Councillor Harpreet Uppal
Councillor Andrew Marchington
Councillor Habiban Zaman

Observers: Councillor Paul Davies
Councillor Carole Pattison
Councillor Martyn Bolt

89 Membership of Committee

All members of the Committee were present.

90 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the Committee meeting held on 20 August 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

It was noted that:

- The final report of the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel in respect of the future arrangements for the Council's residential housing stock had been presented at Cabinet on 20th October 2020 (Minute 80)
- 'Our Council Plan' had been approved by Council on 21st October 2020 (Minute 85).

91 Interests

No interests were declared.

92 Admission of the Public

All items were considered in public session.

93 Deputations/Petitions

No deputations or petitions were received.

94 Public Question Time

The Committee received questions from Councillor Martyn Bolt in respect of:

(i) Feedback and visibility in respect of the results of the consultation undertaken by Kirklees, Calderdale and West Yorkshire Combined Authority in relation to potential options for a by-pass at Cooper Bridge and subsequent proposals.

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The Chair explained that the results of the consultation had been published on the Combined Authority's website. The expectation was that any changes to the scheme would be subject to consultation with ward councillors and that Cabinet would discuss proposals, and the need for further consultation, at the appropriate time.

The Chair of the Economy and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Panel advised that she had requested an update on the scheme to be provided to Members of that Panel.

(ii) The status of Planning Panels/Committee.

The Chair confirmed that planning was not a quasi-judicial process but an administrative decision-making process. This was set out in Part 5.3 of the Council's Constitution.

95 **Devolution Deal for West Yorkshire**

The Committee received an update on the latest progress in respect of the devolution deal for West Yorkshire, with particular reference to the draft Order currently being developed by Government.

Julie Muscroft - Service Director, Legal, Governance and Commissioning; Alan Reiss - Director of Policy, Strategy and Communications, West Yorkshire Combined Authority; Nick Howe – Corporate Policy Officer, and Councillor Paul Davies - Kirklees representative, West Yorkshire Combined Authority Scrutiny Committee were in attendance for this item.

It was explained that, following the 'minded to agree' deal that had been signed in March 2020, a Scheme had been prepared which set out the proposed future arrangements for the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA). An eight-week public consultation on the Scheme had then taken place between May and July, which had received 4400 responses. The consultation results, along with further feedback from Leeds City Council and Kirklees Council, had been submitted to the Secretary of State, in September, to be taken into account when drafting the Order.

Each partner authority would be asked to agree to the final Order in November thus allowing it to be laid before Parliament before Christmas. The Order would then be made by January/February 2021, so that a mayoral election could take place in May 2021.

The deal would devolve a range of powers and significant long-term funding to the region, with the aim of giving people more control and greater freedom to decide their future. It would provide the region with a greater level of influence with Government to shape policy and offer the potential for further deals in the future. The Combined Authority would gain access to funding streams equating to £1.8 billion of additional public funding, which would translate to a far greater impact on the economy and inclusive growth in West Yorkshire.

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The process had been designed by Central Government and was set down in statute. It was believed that there had been a number of opportunities for Councils and the public to comment on the deal.

Questions and comments were invited from Committee Members and the following key issues were covered during discussion:

- In response to a question about representation of all political groups, and thus the electorate, it was explained that the Combined Authority would comprise the Mayor and a representative appointed by each of the five constituent authorities plus non-voting members from City of York Council and the Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership (LEP). In addition, there would be 3 members appointed for political balance, based on the overall political make-up of the region. Although this meant that not all political parties would be represented, WYCA would be the only Combined Authority in the country where this wider formal voting representation was in place. It was also anticipated that there would be at least as many positions on Combined Authority Committees as currently and this provided opportunities for other Elected Members to be represented and involved. Further engagement would be a decision for the Mayor.
- The proposals for scrutiny were drafted at this stage and would be considered by the WYCA Scrutiny Committee on 13th November.
- In respect of responsibility for climate change, it was anticipated that the existing advisory Green Economy Panel, which advised the Combined Authority on policy, would remain, although this would be subject to review in the future. Climate change was one of the Combined Authority's current top 4 priorities.
- The Scheme enabled two Deputy Mayor positions. The first would carry out the mayoral functions when the Mayor was absent and this individual would have to be a member of the Combined Authority. The second would hold responsibility for a number of the functions currently held by the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and would be appointed by the Mayor. PCC functions would be scrutinised by the Police and Crime Panel in a similar way to currently.
- The Combined Authority would be required to adopt an Investment Strategy setting out the broad principles of how funding would be spent. Members would have the chance to scrutinise the development of this document. Final decisions on spending would be undertaken in the public domain.
- The finance would be allocated using a strategic approach rather than an equal split between all the partner authorities. There would be opportunities for schemes to be developed in partnership.
- In respect of the additional feedback submitted by Kirklees, following a discussion at Council in September 2020; it was explained that
 - this report aimed to address the issues raised in respect of scrutiny of implementation of the deal and a letter had been sent to Scrutiny Chairs to update them on this issue.
 - The Spatial Development Strategy would set out the high-level principles and common areas of planning policy across the region. It would have to be approved for adoption by the Combined Authority with a positive vote from each representative of all five constituent local authorities. It would be developed using a bottom-up, collaborative approach and the ambition was to build upon Local Plans and enhance the work to address the climate emergency already being undertaken across the region.

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- A report would be presented to Kirklees Corporate Governance and Audit Committee in respect of local arrangements for decision-making and Members would have the opportunity to feedback and comment on the proposals. The report would include case studies and look at the issues of veto and exercise of concurrent powers, with the aim of ensuring that appropriate checks and balances were in place.
- Combined Authority Working parties were considering how to take scrutiny forward and this was an opportunity for the views of Kirklees Members to be fed into this process. There was a desire to enhance and broaden scrutiny and ensure that it could influence decisions going forward.

The following conclusions were highlighted:

- Consideration needed to be given to how decisions going through at Combined Authority level could be made visible to all elected members within the constituent authorities, to ensure transparency and accountability.
- There needed to be a strong emphasis on pre-decision scrutiny and involvement of Members at a much earlier stage; this would also help in terms of transparency.
- There should be opportunities for both elected members and members of the public to engage and be able to put direct questions to the Mayor/Combined Authority.
- Climate change should be a key focus.
- Each constituent local authority would determine its own local arrangements for decision-making. This would include matters such as the approval of the Spatial Development Strategy. In Kirklees, it was considered that this should be done through submission to full Council.

Resolved –

That the progress made in respect of the devolution process in West Yorkshire be noted.

96 Kirklees Communities Partnership Plan – Refresh, October 2020

The Committee received a report which offered Members the opportunity to discuss and comment on the October 2020 refresh of the Kirklees Communities Partnership Plan, which outlined the key strategic priorities for the next 12 months.

Jill Greenfield - Service Director, Customer and Communities; Jo Richmond - Head of Service, Communities; Lee Hamilton - Safer Kirklees Manager; Chris Walsh - Performance Lead, Communities; Chief Inspector Alan Travis, West Yorkshire Police; and Councillor Carole Pattison – Chair of the Communities Board and Cabinet Member for Learning, Aspiration and Communities were in attendance for this item.

The report reminded the Committee of the statutory duty on Community Safety Partnerships to develop a strategic plan to address multi-agency issues affecting quality of life for residents.

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In Kirklees this was known as the Communities Partnership Plan and included work being done in respect of cohesion, migration and re-settlement. The Plan covered the period 2018-2021 and was refreshed on an annual basis. The refresh now before the Committee was informed by the insights, data and analysis gathered from the Partnership Strategic Intelligence Assessment (PSIA), up to the end of September 2020. It recognised the significant challenges presented by the pandemic whilst continuing to address the established, overarching priorities;

- Preventing and Reducing Crime
- Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour
- Protecting People from Serious Harm
- Improving the Place

The report set out the key findings from the PSIA in relation to each of the priorities with a particular focus on the impact of the pandemic and the disproportionate impact on communities in the more deprived areas.

It was explained that:

- The overall priorities/themes remained current and largely unchanged but had been refreshed to reflect the findings of the PSIA.
- There was a cross-cutting focus on: prevention and early intervention; targeting key hot-spot areas; support for victims and reduction in re-offending.
- The governance structures were currently being reviewed.

Questions and comments were invited from Committee Members and the following key issues were covered during discussion:

- Challenges had been experienced in respect of restorative justice work during lockdown. The three Victim Hubs had been, and were currently, closed but a 24-hour telephone line had been set up in conjunction with Victim Support. The potential for the use of technology to facilitate remote meetings would continue to be explored. During lockdown contact with offenders had been telephone-based but some face to face engagement was now taking place.
- The Police worked closely with the Safer Kirklees Team on both the development and delivery of the Plan. Joint working took place with neighbouring districts and at both regional and national level, particularly in relation to high risk crime and best practice was regularly shared between the Community Safety Partnerships across West Yorkshire. It was accepted that the level of co-operative working could be more clearly reflected in the Plan and this would be taken on board.
- Serious violent knife-enabled crime had decreased significantly during lockdown against a background of significant improvement in the figures over the preceding 12 to 18 months. Both preventative and enforcement work had been undertaken during this period. Nationally, surge funding had been provided by the Government to increase the Police footprint from an enforcement perspective and it was considered that the work undertaken with 'Operation Jemlock' had made a real impact in terms of the ability to carry knives on the street and to commit offences. The key areas of focus were guided by the reports, intelligence and a serious violence needs assessment. A lot of work had been undertaken in South Kirklees but this was a district wide issue and each of the Neighbourhood Policing Teams in the North had violent crime plans in place.

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- It was appreciated that a time delay in addressing or feeding back on reported anti-social behaviour could be frustrating for residents and that it was important that they were assured that their efforts in reporting were worthwhile. Although delays could be attributed to the availability of resources it was acknowledged that there could also be some improvement in communication on this issue and this would be looked at. Engagement was also important in this regard and work had been undertaken with local schools in terms of developing the responsible citizenship agenda.
- The recognition of the importance of the physical appearance of an area within the Plan was welcomed.
- The Partnership Plan was a very broad, high-level document and a number of action plans sat beneath it which set out specific targets, delivery mechanisms, timescales and outcomes. A suggestion that it would be helpful to refer to those underlying documents within the Plan was taken on board.
- A Drugs and Alcohol Strategy had been drafted prior to the pandemic but its progress had been delayed due to the pressures on Public Health. It had been submitted to the Communities Board for comment and it was anticipated that the relevant working group would be meeting in the near future to progress this piece of work.
- Mental health was an important consideration in reducing re-offending and relevant representatives were key partners in the strategy and operational groups dealing with this priority.
- Further work was planned in respect of raising the visibility of the work of the Community Safety Partnership, the Communities Board and the underlying sub-groups and Action Plans, and engagement with partners around support, challenge and accountability. This would include consideration of how partnership resources could be utilised to achieve the best possible outcomes.

Resolved –

(1) That the officers from Communities, representative of West Yorkshire police and the Chair of the Communities Board be thanked for attending the meeting and presenting the report on the 2020 refresh of the Communities Partnership Plan.

(2) That officers be requested to take account of the comments made by the Panel in relation to the 2020 refresh of the Kirklees Communities Partnership Plan

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Domestic Abuse Strategic Update

The Committee received a report which provided a further update on the development of the Kirklees Domestic Abuse Strategy.

Alexia Gray, former Service Manager for Domestic Abuse, was in attendance and gave a presentation which highlighted; the impact of the pandemic; the responses adopted to mitigate this so that services could continue to operate effectively and safely; and the links to the wider strategy including the proposed refresh of the underlying detailed action plan. This work had included the establishment of remote working practices, ensuring robust communication and reporting mechanisms and constant monitoring of data and intelligence.

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Questions and comments were invited from Committee Members and the following key issues were covered during discussion:

- The data was open to interpretation; the 4% increase was within a normal range and could not be attributed to the pandemic with any certainty. The data from the police required further examination in respect of whether there was a different split between the level of 3rd party and direct reports prior to and during lockdown.
- It had been recognised at an early stage of lockdown that people were using quieter methods to report incidents. The Police had created an online reporting form, the take-up of which had been good, and this facility would now be retained. A live webchat function had also been established in conjunction with the Pennine Domestic Abuse Partnership.
- Information could be provided to Members in terms of repeat calls. The rates for both victims and perpetrators had been at approximately 30 to 40% for the last 2 to 3 years. This was an issue that would be considered as part of the refresh of the action plan. Addressing it required work in relation to changing behaviours.
- There was a good stock of appropriate emergency accommodation within Kirklees and there good working relationships with Women's Aid and the women's refuge and a strong partnership with housing services for those needing to move on.
- The impact of the innovative work being undertaken by the IDAAs (Independent Domestic Abuse Advocates) and the police was welcomed. If new methods/systems for reporting were proving to be effective then these should be retained and developed. It was confirmed that funding for the IDAAs to go out with the police would be factored into the main contract from 2021.
- Consistent and stable funding was needed to allow effective methods to be developed and continued over time rather than intermittent pots of funding that only addressed an issue in the short-term.
- It was good practice to have ideas for projects in place to facilitate a fast response to potential funding opportunities. A needs assessment and gap analysis was being undertaken and partnership work was taking place, across West Yorkshire, to consider and develop potential projects.
- Work had progressed in respect of the Place Based Working funding but had stalled due to the pandemic. A report would be submitted to a future meeting to update the Committee on this area of work.

Resolved

(1) That the update in respect of the 2019-21 Kirklees Domestic Abuse Strategy be noted and that the comments of the Panel be taken into account going forward.

(2) That the work undertaken by the Community Safety Partnership to mitigate the additional pressures arising from the pandemic be welcomed.

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Work Programme 2020-21

The work programme for the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee 2020/21 was noted.

The next meeting of the Committee was scheduled for 3rd December 2020.

99 Any Other Business

The Scrutiny Annual Report for 2019/20 would be presented to Council at its meeting to be held on 25th November 2020. Each Chair was requested to prepare to present a highlight from their Panel.