

Contact Officer: Leigh Webb

KIRKLEES COUNCIL

ECONOMY AND NEIGHBOURHOODS SCRUTINY PANEL

Tuesday 6 October 2020

Present: Councillor Harpreet Uppal (Chair)
Councillor Richard Eastwood
Councillor Richard Murgatroyd
Councillor John Taylor

Co-optees:

In attendance: Councillor Peter McBride – Deputy Leader and
Cabinet Member for Regeneration
Councillor Rob Walker – Cabinet Member Culture and
Environment
Councillor Naheed Mather – Cabinet Member
Greener Kirklees

Apologies: Councillor Martyn Bolt
Councillor Yusra Hussain
Andrew Bird (Co-optee)
Chris Friend (Co-optee)
Eilidh Ogden (Co-optee)

- 1 Membership of the Committee**
Apologies were received from Councillor Martyn Bolt, Councillor Yusra Hussain, Chris Friend (Co-optee), Eilidh Ogden (Co-optee) and Andrew Bird (Co-optee).
- 2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**
That the minutes of the meeting held on 27 August 2020 be agreed as a correct record.
- 3 Interests**
There were no declarations of interest.
- 4 Admission of the Public**
All items were considered in public session.
- 5 Deputations/Petitions**

No deputations or petitions were received.

6. Public Question Time

No questions were asked under this item.

7. Community Response to Covid-19

The Panel received a report setting out details of the work that has taken place working alongside the voluntary and community sector (VCS) in response to the pandemic. The report considered some of the outcomes, learning and challenges arising from the last six months, particularly with regards to the VCS going forward and assisting in system changes.

The report highlighted the following areas in detail:

- The community response to Covid-19;
- Capacity of voluntary organisations within the community;
- How such capacity and sustainability or viability has been impacted by Covid-19;
- The ways in which the experiences of the last six months have begun to influence what happens next.

Colleagues from Third Sector Leaders and the anchor organisations were in attendance to input directly into the discussion and provide their unique perspectives.

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic a co-ordinated community emergency response (CER) for the Kirklees District was established on 19 March 2020. This rapid response saw the mobilisation of partners and services from across the council, councillors, the wider system, voluntary and community groups and individual volunteers. The CER system was primarily about ensuring that citizens of Kirklees were kept safe and well and protected from Covid-19. National government guidelines were being issued daily and as the country went into lockdown the CER focused on protecting the most vulnerable with basic essentials to keep people safe and protect life, such as food, medicines, and other essential items.

With regard to statistical data it was reported that a total number of 3,725 requests for help have been received into the council between 25 March and 23 September 2020. Of these, 30% were from people aged 70 years or over. The highest number of requests came from people in the Newsome ward (277), followed by Cleckheaton (266). The ward with the highest rate of requests was Cleckheaton (15.4 requests per 1,000). The most common type of support requested by people aged 70+ years was shopping (who can afford to pay for essential items) and for people aged 18-49 years it was shopping (who cannot afford to pay for essential items).

In order to meet the challenges at a ward level, it was reported that a decision was taken to increase ward member budgets from £20k to £50k per ward. Flexible and adapted guidelines were put in place for existing grant programmes to meet the Covid-19 response and uplifted funding for foodbanks to cover their surplus spend.

With regard to the issue of food and welfare it was highlighted that provision has been a critical aspect of the community response with existing and new food banks supporting thousands of individuals. It was reported that approximately sixty food banks are now operating across Kirklees with the three main foodbanks seeing an increased take up of a third from the same period last year.

Paul Bridges, CEO of Huddersfield Mission, Andy Petrie, CEO of Local Services 2 You, and Val Johnson, representing Third Sector Leaders were invited to give their perspective in respect of the community response to Covid. All commented on the positive approach to partnership working that had provided a platform to further build on relationships and developing cultures. Funding, capacity and sustainability remain key issues for the sector going forward.

Questions and comments were invited from Panel Members and the following issues were raised:

- In response to a question concerning Community Buildings, Councillor Walker acknowledged the need for the Council to retain a supportive role as they are vital assets. Councillor Taylor suggested the need for business plans around community asset transfers to be revisited in light of the effects of the pandemic.
- With regard to track and trace support payments, Jill Greenfield, Service Director Customer and Communities, undertook to take back the issue of communications and sharing information with Elected Members
- Members raised the opportunities available for the Council to identify new volunteers and potentially keep a register of active citizens.
- With regard to inequalities, the Panel noted the work with community organisations and acknowledged that ethnicity was not the only factor contributing to inequality with regard to the pandemic.
- The Chair commented on the challenges faced by community organisations in relation to capacity, income generation and community buildings and suggested that future scrutiny be undertaken in respect of moving forward with the community anchor model to ensure the medium and long term stability of community organisations.

RESOLVED –

The Panel noted the positive ongoing work undertaken by the Council and community organisation in response to the Covid 19 pandemic.

8 Draft Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD's) and Bio Diversity Net Gain Technical Advice Note

The Panel received draft supplementary planning documents relating to House Extensions and Alterations and Housebuilder Design, along with a technical advice note in relation to Bio Diversity net gain.

The draft House Extensions and Alteration Guide SPD will support the implementation of the policies in the Local Plan, primarily policy LP24 Design, and provide further guidance on key considerations for planning applications for the extension and alteration of existing homes in Kirklees. Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) are produced to add clarity in relation to the application of planning policies set out in the Local Plan. The draft SPD provides clear guidance about how the council will implement Local Plan policy LP24 (Design) and determine what will normally be expected in terms of high quality, well-designed extensions and alterations to houses in Kirklees. It will provide important certainty for elected members, officers and external parties such as the local community and developers.

The draft Housebuilders Design Guide SPD will provide further guidance on key considerations for planning applications for the design and layout of housing developments in Kirklees.

A presentation was given setting out the general scope and content of the documents. The adopted Local Plan policy LP24 (Design) which provides the policy basis for the SPD's was appended to the report.

A report was submitted providing detailed advice on how Biodiversity Net Gain should be achieved by development within Kirklees in accordance with Local Plan policy LP30 (Biodiversity and Geodiversity). It was explained that a technical advice note will provide important certainty for elected members, officers and external parties such as the local community and developers.

Following public consultation, approval for the Technical Guidance Note will be sought from Cabinet. Subject to approval, the Technical Guidance Note will be given weight as a material consideration in the planning applications process but will carry less weight than a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). At a later date, once the Environment Bill is passed, the intention will be to progress this to become an SPD including any changes required through the Environment Act. At the relevant time it will therefore be subject to the formal process for a Supplementary Planning Document. The adopted Local Plan policy LP30 (Biodiversity and Geodiversity) which provides the policy basis for this guidance note was appended to the report.

Questions and comments were invited from Panel Members and the following issues were raised:

- With regard to the draft SPD's, the Panel welcomed the documents as a means of providing clarity on the planning policies of the Council to residents and applicants.
- In response to a question concerning sloped sites and winter maintenance, it was explained that the Highways Design Guide deals with the issue of gradients.
- Members raised the importance of noise insulation being built into architect's designs.

- In relation to the consultation period, it was suggested that residents who had recently purchased properties be targeted to gain their experience and views. Furthermore it was suggested that the Place Standard tool be used to proactively promote the consultation and reach a wide range of residents across local communities.
- The role of Councillors, with their local knowledge, was recognised as an important element with regard to Bio diversity offsetting

RESOLVED –

That the comments and views of the Panel, as set out above, be considered when finalising the draft SPD's, in advance of the public consultation planned for mid-October 2020.

9. Work Programme

The Panel's Work Programme for 2020/21 and forthcoming items/activities was submitted.

RESOLVED –

That the work programme be noted.