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KIRKLEES COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Thursday 15th April 2021

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

129 Membership of Committee

All Members of the Committee were in attendance.

130 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Chair provided an update in relation to the Annual Update in respect of Flood Risk (Minute 125):

- The Highways Team had confirmed that the priority gritting routes had been used as a template for the new rounds for gullies to be cleared on a cyclical basis.
- All other gullies were cleared on a reactive basis, as and when requested, with requests generally being generated through ROSS or Councillor Enquiries.
- The response time was normally 15 working days, but bad storms could create a backlog. Customers were not normally updated on requests regarding blocked gullies.
- The team often received requests for blocked gullies due to customers seeing standing water and not realising that this was associated with the design of a gully as they have a silt trap.

131 Interests

No interests were declared.

132 Admission of the Public

All items were considered in public session.

133 Deputations/Petitions

No deputations or petitions were received.

134 Place Based Working Group - Final Report

The final report of the Working Group on Place Based Working was presented for the Committee's consideration.

The Chair of the Working Group, Councillor Uppal, introduced the report. She thanked all the Members of the Working Group for their contribution to its work and thanked the Governance Officers for their assistance. She explained that:

- The Working Group had been established further to a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee in September 2019, with the membership drawn from the Corporate, and Economy and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Panels.
- The main objectives had been to review the development of the revised approach to place based working in Kirklees and to examine how it would become embedded within the organisation and across its partners.
- The Group had met on number of occasions between September 2019 and March 2021, gathering evidence from Council officers, the Place Partnership Leads, third sector leaders and community anchor representatives, and had produced a final report which included a number of recommendations.
- The clear conclusion was that place based working was the right approach to take; doing more to engage citizens in their place, encouraging pride in their local area and ensuring their ideas were put into practice. Also, that Councillors, as representatives of local people, should be fully engaged with this work.
- A number of excellent approaches had been utilised. The Place Standard Tool was a good way of engaging with citizens by going to where they were and the community anchor approach had proved to have a number of real benefits. The Council had worked very closely with the voluntary and community sectors during the pandemic and this had allowed measures to be implemented quickly during a challenging time. It was believed that this approach should continue.
- The response in respect of the Place Partnership model had been more mixed. There were benefits but it was considered that some work was needed in relation to its aims and objectives, ensuring buy-in, and how decisions were made on themes and budget allocation.
- Cultural change would be needed to ensure that the place based working approach became embedded across the organisation and the key outcomes were achieved.
- Excellent engagement had taken place but there was a need to take the key priorities from residents and ensure that they were followed up and that the necessary resources were available to do so. Buy-in was needed from all departments particularly where there may be a mismatch between the community priorities and the corporate priorities.
- Geography was an issue that had been discussed on a number of occasions, particularly in relation to the Place Partnerships. It was considered that there was a need to understand the basis for certain wards being brought together; there was a difference between administrative boundaries and the need to identify places to reflect how citizens saw them. Some Councillors had identified local transport infrastructure as one of the key issues that should be considered.
- It was considered that there should be systemic engagement with the Town and Parish Councils.
- The structure and process for making decisions at Huddersfield level had also been discussed.

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- The additional £30,000 Covid-related budget for Ward Councillors had been welcomed. It had been fast and responsive to particular needs in an area and consideration should be given to retaining this initiative.
- There was a need to ensure that resources were set aside for implementation after Place Standard work had been undertaken, with clear timescales.
- The 'community anchor' approach had facilitated multi-agency teams working in community buildings. This was considered to be a good way of making sure that place was a key priority and could also help key officers better understand place.
- The 'community anchor' approach should be extended and should also include smaller voluntary and community sector partners to widen representation.

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

- There was a potential issue with the resources and capacity of Town and Parish Councils which could be a challenge in increasing engagement. Consideration should be given to what could be done to help them build their capacity and thus increase their ability to be more effective partners.
- The £30,000 Covid related budget had been really useful; the flexibility allowed it to be used in innovative ways and its continuation, in some form, would be welcomed.
- The chosen geographies appeared arbitrary and some wards shared no sense of place; this needed to be addressed.
- There was concern about the flexibility and timescales for the Place Partnerships funding in respect of mental health and domestic abuse.
- In terms of measuring the effectiveness of the place based working model, further to the submission of the Working Group's final report; the Strategic Director – Corporate Strategy, Commissioning and Public Health was the lead officer and the Cabinet Member was Councillor Cathy Scott. The report included an Action Plan for the key recommendations and it was proposed that continued monitoring be undertaken by this Committee and that it be submitted to Cabinet.
- The issues of geography and boundaries were complex and it was noted that a lot of areas did not have a Town or Parish Council.

The Chair concluded by welcoming this excellent report which helped to emphasise both the importance of Councillors being at the centre and that if people were asked what their priorities were the results needed to be disseminated upwards and acted upon.

RESOLVED –

(1) That everyone involved in the production of the Working Group's final report be thanked for their input.

(2) That the report be sent to the relevant Cabinet Member for comment, with a request that the Action Plan be completed, for submission to a future meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, and that consideration be given to how Cabinet might take the recommendations forward.

135 Work Programme 2020/21

As this was the last meeting of the municipal year the Chair expressed her thanks to all Members for their contribution during the last year.

Members were invited to put forward any suggested issues for inclusion in the Work Programme for 2021/22 by contacting the Chair or the Governance Team.