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KIRKLEES COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Thursday 3rd December 2020

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

Observers: Councillor Paul Davies

100 Membership of Committee

All Members of the Committee were in attendance.

101 Minutes of Previous Meeting

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 29th October 2020 be approved as a correct record.

The Chair provided updates to Members as follows:

- The WYCA Overview and Scrutiny Committee had agreed to pursue Option 1 - Enhanced Select Committee System (Minute 95, Devolution).
- In respect of the Communities Partnership Plan (Minute 96);
 - Members' comments in respect of utilising technology for victim support and restorative justice had been noted and the Partnership continued to use various platforms to engage and support victims. The Victim Hubs remained closed due to the latest lockdown restrictions. A Victims' Strategy was being developed and comments from Scrutiny would inform this.
 - The plan would be amended to reflect the local, regional and national cooperative working that takes place through the Kirklees Partnership, particularly in relation to other West Yorkshire Districts.
 - The comments made in relation to communication with the victims of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) and how this could be improved would be taken on board and the ASB Strategy Group would give consideration to how this could be improved; noting that this should also include communication with Elected Members.
 - The plan would be amended to reflect the range of strategies and action plans that sat beneath it.
 - The Drugs and Alcohol Strategy Group that had been created pre-pandemic was to reconvene in early 2021 to continue to progress this area of work.
 - The Communities Board continued to review its governance arrangements and how it could continue to improve its visibility and outcomes.
- In relation to the Domestic Abuse Strategy (Minute 97);
 - The Service Manager was to explore with the Police if it would be possible to split call sources to establish whether there had been a different split

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between the level of third party and direct reports prior to, and during, lockdown.

- In terms of information for Members in terms of repeat calls:- repeat incidents were considered through the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) and data provided in the Police Monthly updates. The next update was due shortly and the Service Manager could then share the most up to date information.
- The first meeting of the West Yorkshire Funding Group had taken place on 24th November, providing the opportunity to establish the Terms of Reference and discuss upcoming funding opportunities.

102 **Interests**

No interests were declared.

103 **Admission of the Public**

All items were considered in public session.

104 **Deputations/Petitions**

No deputations or petitions were received.

105 **Public Question Time**

No public questions were received.

106 **Council Response to Covid-19 - Update**

Rachel Spencer-Henshall, Director of Public Health and Strategic Director – Corporate Strategy, Commissioning and Public Health; Emily Parry-Harries, Head of Public Health and Jane O'Donnell, Head of Health Protection attended the meeting to provide an update for the Committee in respect of the Council's response to Covid-19, including a look forward to the first half of 2021.

Rachel began by acknowledging that the present situation was unprecedented; it had proved to be challenging for the Council and its partners and a robust test of the ambitions in terms of place-based working. She explained that the Council and its partners had worked together extremely well and this had enhanced their ability to manage the effects of the pandemic and respond to the needs of the district's residents.

It was anticipated that the next six months would provide continued challenges in: keeping the rate of infection down; facilitating community testing; increasing coverage of contact tracing; providing financial and welfare support for people in self isolation; managing any outbreaks; and supporting the NHS in rolling out the vaccination programme. It was recognised that a key element would be the provision of the necessary resources to do this whilst ensuring that vital services continued to be delivered.

The Kirklees Outbreak Control Board, a cross-party body, had responsibility for overseeing the Outbreak Control Plan which had been published online.

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

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- Lateral flow testing provided results in 30 minutes and thus had the advantage of self-isolation being immediate in cases of a positive result; it was also effective in identifying people with a high viral load, even if they were asymptomatic, so that they could self-isolate and reduce the risk of transmission.
- In terms of capacity to undertake the lateral flow testing and targeting particular groups or areas; lessons were being learned from the community testing pilot undertaken in Liverpool and the detail of the offer to Kirklees was still under consideration. Engagement with communities around testing and what support they might need in terms of self-isolation and contact tracing was an important element of the approach. The most vulnerable members of the population would be prioritised.
- The provision of testing/vaccination to large numbers of residents offered an opportunity to disseminate information to them on other issues such as employment support, benefits, debt advice, mental health support and investment into the local economy, although it was recognised that there would be a need for these services to be ready to be able to deal with the increase in demand this might create.
- The inevitable increase in demand for certain services and how this could be addressed was being considered as an integral part of the ongoing recovery planning work.
- In respect of recovery; it was important for community morale that there was visible positive change such as the physical improvements to town centres.
- The level of inequality throughout the district had been brought into focus by the impact of the pandemic. In October 2020 the Council had approved the establishment of an Inequalities Commission and a number of key priority actions to address this issue in the short term, such as re-framing NHS health checks and tailoring services to people who were disproportionately affected. Work was being undertaken with partners to ensure that addressing inequality became embedded.
- There had been a significant impact on local businesses, particularly in the hospitality and retail sectors and consideration should be given to whether there was a need to review the economic strategy in light of this.
- Cabinet were considering proposals in relation to discretionary grant assistance available to support Kirklees businesses.
- There needed to be a balance between reacting to/dealing with the immediate problems for individuals and moving towards a longer-term, sustainable approach.
- The Children's Scrutiny Panel maintained an overview of the outcomes for the district's young people. There would be significant impacts on the current generation and there needed to be strong engagement with the Department for Education in respect of addressing the improvement of educational outcomes over a longer term.
- The Council's Recovery Plan was being reviewed to ensure that it remained fit for purpose for the next six months.
- The Inequalities Commission would determine its own areas of focus. It would be provided with a comprehensive summary of intelligence across five key themes and it was considered that social inclusion and its impacts should be included within the theme of health.

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- Significant support was being made available to support the wellbeing of staff and community volunteers. There was a comprehensive employee healthcare offer and regular wellbeing sessions were taking place and staff surveys undertaken to assess how people were. The dedication and commitment of staff was recognised and they were being encouraged to take leave. Best practice on wellbeing was being shared with partners. Regular team meetings and people feeling comfortable to talk about and share their experiences were very important.
- There were a number of valuable community anchor organisations and it was important that the sustainability and funding of these organisations was considered and that they were trusted to undertake their roles as part of the place based approach.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the Committee expresses its thanks to everyone for their hard work during the pandemic, despite the significant challenges, and for their continued commitment as we move forward into 2021.
- (2) That the Scrutiny Panels ensure that inequalities impact is considered in all elements of their work, to help ensure that addressing inequality becomes embedded as a priority across the organisation.
- (3) That consideration be given to: the opportunity provided by the implementation of mass community testing and vaccination to disseminate information, in relation to support services, to a wider audience; and any measures that might be needed to ensure that these services are able to deal with any additional demand.

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Climate Commission - Update

Colin Parr – Strategic Director, Environment and Climate Change and John Atkinson - Project Manager, Public Protection presented a progress report in respect of the development and establishment of the Kirklees Climate Commission. The report also included an update on the Council's annual internal carbon emissions reporting, against the target set in 2010. Councillor Paul Davies, the Portfolio Holder for Culture and Greener Kirklees was also in attendance.

The presentation highlighted the following points:

- The background to the establishment of the Climate Commission, based on a model developed by the University of Leeds.
- The Commission would be an independent body which would utilise a collaborative and partnership approach to promote leadership on climate change, provide advice to inform policy and shape the actions of local stakeholders, enable and encourage the sharing of ideas and best practice, and consider the development of a Kirklees Green Charter.
- The 'road map' for implementation and priority actions.
- Achievement of the target set in 2010 to reduce the Council's carbon emissions by 40% by 2020/21.
- The transition, in 2021, to reporting against a 'net zero' target for the district as a whole, which would be a significantly more challenging target to achieve.

Members asked questions and commented on the issues raised with the following key issues being covered:

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- Achievement of the target set in 2010 was applauded. It was acknowledged that achieving a district wide target of net zero would present a greater challenge.
- The creation of the Commission was welcomed.
- It was important that the Commission became accepted as a 'critical friend'.
- It would be beneficial to take a more global perspective of action on climate change and link to organisations/networks such as ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability or the Global Covenant of Mayors on Climate Change.
- Actions should be framed in terms of their contribution to national goals and this approach recommended to the Local Government Association (LGA) to encourage other local authorities to do the same and to feedback to national government.
- It was essential that the Commission retained its independence and considered Kirklees as a whole.
- It was acknowledged Professor Andy Gouldson from Leeds University, who was assisting in the implementation of the Commission, was recognised as an expert in best practice in this area.

Councillor Davies said that he welcomed the creation of the Commission and resultant partnerships and acknowledged that part of the role may be to challenge and act as a 'critical friend'. He undertook to discuss the adoption of a global perspective and framing actions in terms of national/international goals with officers.

Further comments and questions were made as follows:

- The move from carbon reduction to carbon capture/offset in order to achieve the net zero target would be challenging and would encompass a wide range of issues/actions at both local and national level.
- There were positive initiatives that could be progressed now, such as expanding woodland planting and creating/restoring quality green infrastructure.
- The development of a 'road map' to achieving the 2038 target would be part of the next phase.
- It was important that the Climate Commission's work programme aligned with the Council's budget process to ensure recommendations could be submitted/actioned in a timely way.
- The Council had previously undertaken research work in relation to the Passivhaus standard for construction and consideration should be given to its use, particularly in respect of Council projects.
- The pilot funding for deep retro fitting was welcomed; this work and development of the necessary skills to undertake it would be important in the longer term.
- Smaller organisations and individuals would need sufficient time to allow them to make the necessary changes.
- Consideration was needed in relation to engagement and mechanisms for feedback on outcomes, to ensure transparency.
- Tree planting schemes were an excellent way to encourage cross-community involvement and to engage with young people.

RESOLVED –

(1) That officers be requested to consider the points and suggestions raised by the Committee, as set out below, and where appropriate they be used to inform the development of the Climate Change Commission:

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- i. The need for the Commission to be progressed as soon as possible.
- ii. The adoption of a wider global perspective of action on climate change.
- iii. The benefits of working with the Local Government Association.
- iv. Recognition of the need to consider carbon capture/offset.
- v. The need for the Commission to be aware of, and take account of, the timescales associated with Council budget setting.
- vi. The need for consideration of how the recommendations made by the Commission will feed into Council decision making and how they will be monitored.
- vii. The importance of developing mechanisms to provide: effective feedback to the community/stakeholders on outcomes to ensure transparency and wider buy-in; and robust engagement particularly with young people and the voluntary sector.
- viii. The potential for the use of Passivhaus standards, particularly for Council owned sites/projects.
- ix. The potential for the development of a district heating system.

(2) That further progress reports on the Climate Commission be submitted to the Committee on a regular basis, to include the proposed approach to achieving the 2038 net zero target.

108 Work Programme 2020/21

The Committee's Work Programme for 2020/21 was noted.

109 Any Other Business

The Chair reported that urgent items had been submitted to Cabinet, as set out below:

- An item in relation to the development of land at Southgate, Huddersfield, to the meeting held on 18th November 2020.
- An item in relation to the Additional Restrictions Grant Scheme, to the meeting held on 26th November 2020. It had been agreed that this item would be exempt from call-in, so that the grant monies can be made available as quickly as possible to businesses that were in need, but that a report on the grants and how they work together should be submitted to the next possible Economy and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Panel.

She also reported that the Scrutiny Annual Report 2019/20 had been submitted to Council on 25 November 2020.