

Contact Officer: Sheila Dykes

KIRKLEES COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Thursday 18th March 2021

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

119 Membership of Committee

Apologies were received on behalf of Councillor Harpreet Uppal.

120 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 24th February 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

The Chair provided updates to Members.

In relation to the Culture, Heritage and Tourism Strategies she explained that, since the meeting on 11th February, the Head of Culture and Tourism had contacted each of the three organisations who had made submissions;

- The Friends of Spen Beck/Mann Dam had been invited to make contact with the Council's Greenspace Team. This team were already working with local groups and ward members to develop a masterplan for a country park in this area, which would include tree planting as well as other ecological interventions, and the group would be invited to get involved.
- The Red House Heritage Group had been assured that citizens and communities would be at the heart of all three strategies. The Museums and Galleries Manager would continue to work with them to ensure that the community could still access Red House at points throughout the year as well as being able to access other facilities on the site on a regular basis.
- A number of the key points raised by Environmental Projects in Kirklees/Three Valleys Nature Park would be included in a brief for consultants to ensure that what was developed was about sustainable tourism and a respect for the landscape, rather than encouraging tourism which would lead to it being damaged and not able to be appreciated by future generations. Further engagement would be undertaken when developing the brief.

A submission had also been received from the Huddersfield Canal Society, following the meeting. Their constructive comments had been shared with the

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officers working on the Heritage Strategy to ensure that the canals were recognised within it. An assurance had been given that, when consultants were appointed to produce the Tourism Strategy, the canals would be included and the points made about how information was shared would be considered. (Minute 116).

In respect of the urgent officer delegated decision to enter into a collaborative agreement with the Department of Health and Social Care to deliver Covid-19 community testing in Kirklees; as requested, an update on community testing had been provided to the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel, as part of a wider update in respect of the local position and response to the pandemic, at its meeting held on 18th February 2021 (Minute 118).

121 **Interests**

No interests were declared.

122 **Admission of the Public**

All items were considered in public session.

123 **Deputations/Petitions**

No deputations or petitions were received.

124 **Public Question Time**

No public questions were received.

125 **Local Flood Risk Management - Annual Review**

Rashid Mahmood, Flood Manager, Planning and Development and Mathias Franklin, Head of Planning and Development were in attendance to present the annual report in respect of progress against the Action Plan of the Kirklees Local Flood Risk Management Strategy. The report also informed the Committee of the proposed revision of the local strategy to ensure that it was consistent with the new national strategy, published in August 2020.

Rashid explained that during the preceding twelve month period:

- £340,000 of Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) Community and Business Grant support had been provided to flood victims following Storm Ciara/Dennis in February 2020.
- A West Yorkshire Innovative Resilience Fund bid for £9.8 million had been submitted in January 2021. A successful bid would provide the necessary funding to scale up the community and voluntary sector and natural flood management works in Kirklees.
- A Property Flood Resilience Grant had been launched in January 2021 with the aim of better protecting 170 properties flooded due to Storm Ciara/Dennis.

It was also explained that the current local strategy had been completed in 2013 and last revised in 2019. The adoption of the new national strategy was seen as an opportunity to review the local strategy and ensure that it was in alignment and this would include consideration of the following themes:

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- An emphasis on nature based solutions.
- A greater focus on creating resilient communities.
- Adaptive pathways and being agile to new climate hazards.
- A build-back better approach.
- Extending the support to local communities.
- Aligning incident response and recovery strategy.

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

- There were recurring issues with flooding caused by blocked gullies at certain locations.
- It would be beneficial to have a store of sandbags that could be easily accessed at short notice (particularly in/near to locations where there were recurrent issues) to minimise delay in deployment and assist people in the community to help themselves.
- It was acknowledged that climate change could mean that the position could get much worse, how would this be accommodated within the strategy?
- It was questioned whether enough was being done to ensure that SUDS (Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems) were used for new development.
- The programme and timeline for gully cleaning and clearing blocked drains, and the response time to requests.
- How was the Property Flood Resilience Grant being rolled out and what engagement had been undertaken to ensure that local communities were aware of it and knew how to apply?
- How would the review of the strategy address the ambition in the national strategy in respect of ensuring the right investment and planning decisions to secure sustainable growth and environmental improvements?
- Progress in relation to some of the actions had been outstanding for some time. It was questioned whether the targets would be reassessed as part of review of strategy and what were the limiting factors on progress.
- How often did engagement take place with the community and by what means?
- Could further information be provided in respect of the planning process for drainage provision on new development sites and future proofing against climate change impacts.

In response, Rashid and Mathias explained that:

- Work had been done to identify those gullies that, when they became blocked, could cause flooding and to monitor their condition.
- All priority gullies had been cleared at the end of 2021 and this work would be undertaken periodically.
- The policy in respect of the provision of sandbags was being reviewed. There was a need to identify the priority areas and to consider the logistics. Pro-active deployment of sandbags had been undertaken in advance of the most recent storm event.
- The review of the strategy was, in part, due to the need to consider and accommodate climate change and address its impacts on flood risk.
- Further information could be provided to Members in respect of the programme of gully cleaning; this work was undertaken by the Highways Service. Requests

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for cleaning were dealt with on a reactive basis with priority given to those where there was a risk of flooding.

- Use of SUDs was at the top of the hierarchy in terms of the drainage strategy for new development where the ground conditions were suitable. However, in Kirklees, many areas were not suitable for infiltration due to geo-technical issues and/or topography. Each site was assessed on a case by case basis and if SUDs were not appropriate attenuation and storage would be used. Cost was not understood to be a barrier to the use of SUDs as this would normally be the least costly solution.
- The Local Plan had included some evaluation of sites in terms of their sustainability credentials, of which drainage was an element.
- The Property Resilience Grant scheme had an online portal which set out the criteria and provided an online application process. All those individuals that the Council was aware of, who were likely to be eligible, had been contacted via letter or email and attempts were now being made to contact people by telephone. There was a dedicated inbox and telephone number to deal with related queries.
- Kirklees had an up to date development plan which identified enough land through allocated sites, together with some windfall sites, to meet the district's housing and job growth needs. The allocated sites would be at the lowest level of flood risk or where technical solutions were available to address any issues. If decisions were taken in accordance with the plan then the Authority should be able to resist pressure on sites where flood risk was higher.
- In terms of community engagement (Ref 2.1 on the Action Plan), the programme was on track to complete all 23 wards by 2023.
- In general community engagement focussed on the highest risk properties with letters issued giving general advice. The consultation process in respect of the revised local strategy had not been decided at this point but would be digital by design and include Councillors and members of the public.
- A range of supplementary planning documents had been produced, including a new residential design guide for new build housing which required the provision of technical information, including that related to drainage. There was a West Yorkshire Combined Authority document which set out requirements such discharge rates and the on-site survey information expected from developers submitting a planning application. A planning application would not be validated without this information. The local validation checklist was currently being updated. The Lead Local Flood Authority would assess the information submitted and the Authority also had access to geo-technology support at regional level. If SUDs were achievable the policy was that they should be used.
- Consideration of climate change was at the heart of the planning system and additional capacity for storage on-site was a requirement of the drainage strategy for new developments. It was stressed however that new development was only a small part of the built environment and how to address issues affecting the existing network was the most important part of response in dealing with storm events.

Resolved –

(1) That the annual report in respect of flood risk management in Kirklees and the intention to review the local strategy to ensure that it aligns with the national strategy be noted.

(2) That officers be asked to give consideration to:

- The provision of an easily accessible supply of sandbags in particular localities, to reduce any delay in deployment to areas of need.
- Improvements in preventative work.
- Reviewing the Action Plan to assess if any improvements can be made to existing targets/timelines.
- The development of an engagement strategy in relation to the review of the local flood risk strategy.
- Ensuring that the local flood risk management strategy aligns with and links in with other Council strategy and planning documents.

126 Place Based Working Group - Progress

The Committee received an update in respect of the progress made by the Place Based Working Group since the last update to the Committee in August 2020.

The remit of the group aimed to review the development of the approach to place based working in Kirklees and how this approach would become embedded within the organisation and across Council partners.

Between September 2019 and March 2021, the group had gathered evidence to inform their work by receiving regular updates from key officers on the work that was being undertaken to progress place based working in Kirklees, the engagement processes (such as the use of the Place Standard Tool) and the planned next steps.

The group had held a joint meeting with the Place Partnership Leads on 17th December 2020 to discuss the progress of the Place Partnership pilot project since its introduction at Annual Council in May 2019. The feedback from the Place Partnership Leads would be incorporated into the group's findings.

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the group had, throughout the process, considered the impact on planned work due to the subsequent additional demand that was placed on Council resources to support business continuity and communities. However, in some respects, the pandemic had also provided the opportunity to implement place based working practices to respond to the associated local challenges. The group had therefore received regular updates on the Council's Community Response to the pandemic.

At a meeting held on 26th November 2020 it had met with and gathered evidence from Third Sector Leaders and Community Anchor Organisation representatives to gain an insight to their views.

The Group had now drawn together its key findings, had considered a draft report and begun to finalise its recommendations for inclusion in the final report with the view for this to be presented to the next meeting of the Management Committee on 15th April 2021.

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127 **Establishment of Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel - Residential Housing Stock Health and Safety Compliance**

The Committee was asked to consider a proposal to establish an Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel to look at Residential Housing Stock Health and Safety Compliance.

Resolved –

(1) That an Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel be established to consider Residential Housing Stock Health and Safety Compliance with the Terms of Reference set out in paragraph 2.2 of the report.

(2) That the membership of the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel be on the basis of a 1:1:1:1 ratio together with a co-opted member and an independent specialist advisor.

128 **Work Programme 2020/21**

The Work Programme for 2020/21 was noted.

129 **Any Other Business**

Members were reminded that, at the meeting of the Committee held on 29th October 2020, a request had been made for an update in respect of the Place Partnerships Funding. Further to a recent Lead Member briefing with the Active Citizens and Places Manager, the Chair reported that:

- At the meeting of Cabinet held on 16th February, approval had been given to the allocation of a further £140,000 of the £1 million mental health themed budget to deliver the WEvolve Community Support Programme. This had brought the total amount allocated to approximately £950,000.
- On 16th March Cabinet had approved the allocation of £400,000 from the domestic abuse themed budget to build capacity, and to train and equip staff and communities to recognise the signs of domestic abuse and make links to local support networks to help mitigate the impact of domestic abuse.