

Contact Officer: Jenny Bryce-Chan

**KIRKLEES COUNCIL**  
**CORPORATE SCRUTINY PANEL**

**Monday 26th July 2021**

Present: Councillor Andrew Cooper (Chair)  
Councillor James Homewood  
Councillor John Taylor  
Councillor Charles Greaves  
Councillor Alison Munro

Co-optees Philip Chaloner

In attendance: Cllr Paul Davies, Cabinet Member Corporate  
Cllr Elizabeth Smaje, Chair of Overview and Scrutiny  
Eamonn Croston, Service Director, Finance  
Andy Simcox, Service Director, for Strategy and  
Innovation  
Martin Dearnley, Head of Risk, Financial, IT and  
Transactional Services

Apologies: Councillor Mahmood Akhtar

- 1 Membership of the Committee**  
Apologies were received from Cllr Mahmood Akhtar.
- 2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**  
That the minutes of the meeting held on the 11<sup>th</sup> March 2021 be approved as a correct record.
- 3 Interests**  
No interests were declared.
- 4 Admission of the Public**  
All agenda items were considered in public session.
- 5 Deputations/Petitions**  
No deputations or petitions were received.
- 6 Public Question Time**  
No questions were asked.

7 Corporate Portfolio Holder Priorities - 2021/22

Cllr Paul Davies, Portfolio holder for Corporate attended the meeting to outline his priorities for 2021. In summary, the Panel was informed that the priorities include:

- **Effective financial management** - to deliver a number of ambitious plans including the blueprint
- **Developing an inclusive procurement strategy** - to grow the voluntary sector and mutual social enterprises and eventually support community wealth building which is an important route to economic recovery. Meetings have been set up with the procurement team to consider what else can be done in addition to the procurement strategy
- **Developing the relationship between the council and its citizens** - this will be reflected in the new access strategy and the development of the library services and investment in the library estate. Work will also be undertaken to look at innovative devolved approach to access to breakdown some of the barriers that exists
- **Community asset transfers and how the council works with the community** – this priority considers the use of council buildings and how the council also interacts with other community buildings. It considers how to bring staff out from the centre to working much more closely with the various areas across Kirklees. This is another aspect of helping communities grow and connecting with communities
- **The IT strategy and digital inclusion** - Covid has highlighted the importance of this and has shown some difficulties for example digital poverty, and issues around connectivity. The IT team are already looking at this with partners across various sectors and new technology skills not just in terms of the workforce but how residents can be supported going forward
- **Communications** - it is how to ensure that citizens feel proud of Kirklees and to achieve this there needs to be more proactive communications. It also involves communicating through consultations and engagement and highlighting what councillors do on the ground

Cllr Davies informed the Panel that the next stage will be to put the plans in place and to also have monitoring in place going forward and some of this work has already started.

In response to the priorities outlined by the portfolio holder, a number of questions and comments were made by the panel including the following:

- Programme management needs to be strengthened as there appears to be a lack of effective programme management on some of the council's programmes and projects

## **Corporate Scrutiny Panel - 26 July 2021**

- Digital Inclusion - more work should be done on rural areas, with emphasis on elderly and disabled people in areas where broadband is not available as they are currently excluded
- Library opening hours should be extended and funding made available to extend the opening times
- Update on the final report of the Democracy Commission before it is closed down
- What is the strategy for areas that don't have libraries facilities?
- Inclusive growth and wealth building should be added to the panel work programme as well as the procurement policy following Brexit
- Is the council making the best use of its assets?
- Is any work being done to improve or expand 'My Kirklees'?
- In the next few months what projects and timescales are envisaged with regard to devolved approach to access, digital flexibility and inclusion and will risk and performance be looked at in a timely manner

Cllr Davies provided a response to the questions asked by the panel and agreed to follow up on libraries, My Kirklees and a number of other areas including performance. He advised that meeting dates had been set up with the Strategic Director to begin to map out some of this work and the panel would be updated in due course.

### **RESOLVED**

That Cllr Davies be thanked for providing an update on his Cabinet portfolio priorities.

## **8 Corporate Directorate Priorities - 2021/22**

The Panel was advised that the Rachel Spencer-Henshall Strategic Director for Corporate Strategy Commissioning and Public Health was unable to make the meeting and Eamonn Croston, Service Director, Finance and Andy Simcox, Service Director for Strategy and Innovation would provide the update on the directorate priorities.

The Panel was advised that following discussions with the Strategic Director regarding the directorate priorities, the priorities very much align with the themes outlined in the early discussions with the portfolio holder. The priorities cover a plethora of areas such as the communication strategy, technology, procurement post Brexit and the issue of social value and the balance between that and the economy. It includes the digital inclusion agenda and access to services, financial management strategy and place shaping and what that means. These are all in view and will be shaped by the administration's priorities.

The Panel was advised that the last 15 months has been unprecedented, and in terms of recovery it is important to make sure service plans and recovery plans are fit for purpose and being mindful of staff recovery and resilience to deliver these agendas. It is recognising that while the restrictions were lifted on the 19<sup>th</sup> July 2021, it does not mean that Covid has gone away in terms of the national, local and regional responses and there will be a significant cohort of staff still involved in that

## **Corporate Scrutiny Panel - 26 July 2021**

agenda. This will be running concurrently to delivering on the political priorities and ambitions alongside dealing with the impacts of Covid.

Where staff have been working on the response to Covid and moved to support other areas, it is getting them back into their previous roles in order to deliver on the priorities that are within this portfolio areas. People will be considering what this means in terms of their own recovery and the impact on their own careers as some may have enjoyed doing other things than what they were previously doing; and it is important to ensure that they are supported within that.

In response to the priorities outlined by Eamonn Croston and Andy Simcox the panel felt that it would be useful to have an update on the financial situation and a dedicated session looking at staff resilience.

### **RESOLVED**

That Eamonn Croston and Andy Simcox be thanked for providing an update on the Corporate Directorate priorities.

#### **9 Setting the Panel Work Programme - 2021/22**

The Panel considered its draft work programme for 2021 and agreed with the items listed with the addition of having input into the procurement strategy and how the council makes best use of its assets. The Panel felt that with regard to the priorities outlined by the portfolio holder, scrutinising performance would also be an important aspect of its work.

### **RESOLVED**

That the panel work programme for 2021/22 be approved.

#### **10 Corporate Matrix**

Martin Dearnley, Head of Risk, Financial, IT and Transactional Services provided an updated on the Corporate Risk Register & Risk Management Action Plan. The Panel was informed that the register has been updated from the previous time it was presented to the panel, however it had not significantly changed just consolidating and merging together of one or two risks. A question was asked on how risks were being monitored in relation to large-funded projects that are funded external to the council.

### **RESOLVED**

That Martin Dearnley be thanked for providing an update on the Corporate Risk Register and that the information be noted.

**11 Date of future Panel meetings**

**RESOLVED**

That the date of future panel meetings be noted.