

Economy and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Panel

Tuesday 13 July 2021 at 1.00pm

Present:

Councillor Harpreet Uppal (Chair)
Councillor Gwen Lowe
Councillor Yusra Hussain
Councillor Martyn Bolt
Councillor John Taylor
Councillor Robert Iredale

Co-optees:

Chris Friend
Andrew Bird

In Attendance:

Natalie Clark, Programme Manager, Environment Services
Will Acornley, Head of Operational Services
Sue Proctor, Service Director, Highways and Street Scene
Simon Taylor, Head of Development and Master Planning
Peter Thompson, Economic Resilience Project Manager

Observers:

Councillor Will Simpson
Councillor Naheed Mather
Councillor Eric Firth
Councillor Peter McBride

Apologies:

No Apologies were given.

1. Membership of the Committee

The Panel welcomed Councillor Iredale to the Panel and noted that he had replaced Councillor Eastwood. The Chair thanked Councillor Eastwood for his support and contributions to the Panel.

The Panel noted that co-optee, Mrs Ogden, had resigned. The Chair thanked Mrs Ogden for her support and contributions to the Panel. The Panel were informed that further co-optee recruitment would be undertaken in the Autumn.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Panel considered the minutes of the previous meeting held on 4 March 2021. A discussion took place regarding a high court judgement on remote meetings which had ruled decisions must be taken in person. The Chair advised that the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee had considered the matter and decided that as Scrutiny Panels could make recommendations but did not undertake decision making, Panel meetings would continue to take place virtually with an agreement to review the matter in September 2021.

Councillor Bolt advised that he could not agree the minutes of the last meeting until legal advice had been received regarding holding Scrutiny Panel meetings virtually.

RESOLVED -

1. The Panel agreed to seek legal advice on holding Scrutiny Panel meetings virtually until the matter was reviewed in September 2021.
2. The minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on the 4 March 2021 were agreed as a correct record subject to the receipt of the above advice.

3. Interests

Councillor Taylor declared an interest regarding his position as a representative on SUEZ (formerly SITA Kirklees Ltd) in relation to agenda item 7.

4. Admission of the Public

All items were considered in the public session.

5. Deputations/Petitions

No deputation or petitions were received.

6. Public Question Time

No questions were received from the public.

7. Kirklees Resource and Waste Strategy

The Panel considered a presentation on the Kirklees Resource and Waste Strategy presented by Sue Proctor, Service Director for Highways Street Scene, Environment and Climate Change and Will Acornley, Head of Operational Services.

Sue Proctor highlighted that:

- The Waste Strategy has previously been to scrutiny and through different elements of the authority throughout its 2 years of development.
- The engagement plan for Summer 2020 took place face-to-face and then virtually online in response to national covid-19 restrictions.
- The consultation received a good response (over 23,000 online and over 7,000 to the consultation itself) and the vast majority of responses were constructive and aspirational for the authority.
- The strategy outlined the strategic ambitions of the authority and was the overarching framework which established the principles on how the authority moved forward to manage resources and waste.
- This was set against the backdrop of the current PFI (Private Finance Initiative) contract reaching its expiry.
- The strategy was not a business case on how to deliver the aspirations or for the procurement of the next waste management contract.
- Work was ongoing to develop business cases, but the strategy was the fundamental pillar in driving what the business cases needed to deliver. Approval of those business cases would be needed in moving forwards.
- A key part of the strategy was the 'reduce, reuse, recycle' initiative which aimed to reduce the waste produced locally.

- This involved working with local communities, businesses, and residents to change their relationship with waste, to instead see the materials that they usually throw away as resources.
- The authority was still waiting to receive the government's environment bill to provide clarity on what the authority would be required to deliver to achieve consistency across the nation.

Natalie Clark, Programme Manager, Environmental Services shared a presentation which outlined the Development of the strategy as follows:

- **Collection consistency framework (2018 – 2020)**. Was the proposal from government to ensure local authorities collect the same materials from the kerb side. The Collection consistency trial identified different options available and the impact.
- **Public engagement (October 2020 – January 2021)**. Shared the options with residents through consultation.
- **Scrutiny (December 2020)** - Feedback was given on the engagement process to scrutiny. This was collated with the collection consistency framework and formulated the strategy, identifying 3 thematic sections:
 - Delivering Modern and sustainable services.
 - Leading by example.
 - Supporting Kirklees families and ensuring inclusions.

In response to a question from panel regarding dog excrement contaminating litter bins, Will Acornley advised that dog excrement could be placed in litter bins, although this could be offensive and could discourage people from emptying them. It was further advised the Panel that additional resources had been put in place in parks over weekends to keep on top of the issue.

In response to a question from the Panel regarding educating the larger public on waste disposal and how we compare with other authorities, Sue Proctor advised that engagement and education within the wider community rather than through schools was part of the engagement process. In focusing on encouraging local communities to engage within themselves, the champion scheme would bring local knowledge, experience, and local contacts together. Sue Proctor further explained that feedback identified some misunderstanding regarding what can go in which container and there was a need for further clarity on this. The Panel was informed that further advice on this would be provided as the strategy moved forward and the enhanced team of waste advisors would have conversations with residents to help them to understand this.

The Panel were advised that the recycling rate was relatively poor in Kirklees in comparison to the national picture and other authorities. This was mainly due to the PFI contract being one of the earliest in the UK and was still very much focused on land fill diversion which led to the investment in waste facility. Since then, a contract with Suez had been built to recover more resources through recycling.

In response to a question from the Panel regarding the detail in the strategy, Will Acornley advised there were a number of business cases with much more detail on what the procurement would look like, but the strategy needed to be in place first. The Panel was informed that Scrutiny would be involved in the process at each phase.

A further discussion was held regarding the ethical nature of the strategy and how material would be processed downstream to ensure that ethical standards are maintained. Will Acornley agreed with the moral aspects and explained that a careful decision had been made about what was added into green bins. It was advised that the Council needed to be transparent and although acknowledging Kirklees does have limited facilities, a cautious approach was required not to lose morality and impact on climate change standards.

The Panel highlighted the word aspirational was used often and noted some of the processes proposed were already in place in other authorities. Will Acornley agreed that some nuances of the strategy were ambitious, particularly the aim to move away from the Council facilitating everything, to connecting with the community and businesses and supporting them to come together to deliver outcomes.

The Panel questioned why Kirklees were behind in some areas in comparison to other authorities and queried when the drop in standard happened. They further suggested that it would be useful to see some data regarding this. The Panel also questioned some of the strategies being seen as potential schemes and in the interests of accountability requested that some baseline statistics, including numbers, percentages, and key performance indicators relating to the present and what was hoped to be achieved going forwards be provided to the Panel so they could review what progress was being made.

The Panel were also advised that Huddersfield had been chosen to trial the re-use scheme and queried why this was. Will Acornley explained Huddersfield was picked as the footprint as it was easier to work with for the purposes of the trial and therefore it could be rolled out quickly. The Panel acknowledged this but suggested that the trial be benchmarked against different areas. In response the Panel were advised that other potential sites would need re-developing.

In respect of Kirklees being considered poor in comparison to other councils, Will Acornley explained that numerous factors were involved such as austerity, budget constraints, and more recent PFI'S in other authorities with more modern facilities. In response to the suggestion of Key Performance Indicators, Will Acornley explained these were threaded throughout the strategy document but agreed they were not obvious. He suggested it would be beneficial to summarise specific pieces of information in the strategy relating to key performance indicators for the Panel.

Councillor Mather thanked the Panel for their support for the initiatives outlined in the strategy and reminded the panel there had been a period of austerity which led to a reduction of capacity in services. The authority was beginning to invest in business cases with a view of Kirklees becoming exemplars again.

Will Acornley responded to a question regarding litter bins and explained that there were around 8,000 bins which the authority needed to rationalise, consider their condition and prioritize. This has been identified as one of the first priorities. Will advised caution was taken with the glass collections based on feedback from the consultation. Some concerns were raised regarding storage and collection, but most respondents were in favour of wheeled bins. He also added that the material stream

was uncertain, and that the environment bill would bring a deposit return scheme which could potentially reduce the glass stream.

A question relating to the press release in March around glass collection at the kerb side was asked. Will Acornley clarified that there was commitment to trial kerb-side collections (under the assumption that the environment bill had passed) to bring the service back.

The Panel asked the question if choice could be given to the type of receptacle used to collect glass due to some types needed more than others. Will Acornley explained that understanding would be gained from the trial to show what worked well where. The Panel also asked if the bring sites received any funding, and the impact this could have on them. Will informed the panel bring sites receive no funding and are a zero cost to the authority.

A further discussion was held around fly tipping, particularly the speed of removal and whether a policy could be developed in relation to fly tipping on private land which provided timescales for removal and any charges incurred. Will Acornley explained that the fly tipping trial helped reduce the response time to reporting to removing waste within 3 days.

RESOLVED -

1. The Panel noted the Kirklees Resource and Waste Strategy and thanked the presenting officers for their contributions.
2. The Panel noted the significance of the educational aspects of the strategy and it was agreed that it was important to make sure waste strategy is embedded across the Council.
3. The Panel noted it would be useful for the re-use scheme trialled in Huddersfield to be benchmarked against different areas.
4. It was agreed that some data showing where Kirklees's standard had dropped in comparison to other authorities, and why this happened, be provided to the Panel.
5. It was agreed that that the key performance indicators in the strategy be provided to the Panel along with specific statistics, including percentages and numbers, which showed what the current picture in Kirklees is, and what was to be achieved going forwards.

8. Dewsbury Town Centre Update

The Panel considered an update on Dewsbury Town Centre Projects and their programmes for delivery presented by Simon Taylor, Head of town centre programmes.

The Panel noted that:

- In respect of the Springfield centre, a key objective was drawing in the younger population and ensuring that the town centre had purpose to be visited.

- Pioneer House (an annex to the college) had undergone a full refurbishment and its heritage had been brought to light. This was now open and an important part of the history of Dewsbury town centre.
- The re-configuration of Dewsbury train station aimed to create a more attractive gateway into the town centre.
- Smaller programmes also included the Dewsbury Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI), the Dewsbury Heritage Action Zone (HAZ), the Dewsbury Revival Grant Scheme, the accelerated Town Fund Package as well as environmental improvements.

In respect of the Dewsbury Town Investment Plan, Simon Taylor highlighted that:

- The plan was submitted in January 2021 identifying 9 projects.
- 24.8 million of investment funds was agreed from central government.
- The public, the town board, local MP, Council Leader, community groups and business interests were involved with the development of the plan.
- 7 core town centre projects were planned to be delivered between now and 2025 / early 2026.

Simon spoke about each project in further detail:

- Consultation on stage 2 of the designs for Dewsbury Market had just finished and were now moving into stage 3.
- There were plans for an update to be presented to Cabinet in March 2022.
- Construction works were scheduled to start midway through 2022 with a strategy in place for businesses that were trading in the town centre when the works began.
- Early works on the Dewsbury Arcade were continuing into Autumn 2021 with a scheduled opening for Summer 2023.
- Dewsbury town park was a long term project, with a scheduled opening in 2025. Planning work was scheduled to begin early in 2022, and construction works were planned to start in early 2024.
- The redevelopment of the Fieldhouse and Daisy Hill area provided residential opportunities.
- The Fieldhouse development would create showcase apartments and planning approval and funding streams were already in place. Design work was ongoing, construction work was scheduled to start summer 2022 with plans for opening 2023.
- The development of Daisy Hill was, currently in early phases of work and was a long term regeneration project lasting from 10 to 15 years with the aim of developing a quality standard residential site.
- The Creative Culture programme involved the development of a new Art Centre with plans for expansion by 2024.
- There were to be events and cultural programmes to encourage people into the town centre.
- Dewsbury Building Revival Grant Scheme was for existing building owners to help them make improvements to their building. This was with additional funding, to be extended until early 2026.
- The transforming cities fund had committed funds of 8 million to a new bus station in Dewsbury. The consultation was scheduled to start 19th July and works were planned to commence in 2023 through to early 2024.

The Panel acknowledged the impact the pandemic has had on the retail industry and that the reduction in retail capacity was likely to decline in all towns and highstreets. The Panel questioned whether the development of the Arcade could be less beneficial to the town centre than expected due to there not being enough tenants to occupy shops and retail space. There were also some concerns expressed as to why people would come to Dewsbury when there was a shopping centre (The White Rose) with free parking nearby.

The Panel gave regard to the Business revival fund and the need to be careful when supporting businesses to ensure sustainability.

A further discussion was held on the need for a green space in the town centre which must be attractive to families, and not become another space for on street drinking and anti-social behaviour. On-street drinking and anti-social behaviour was also an issue in the Daisy Hill area and concerns were raised about the impact this might have on the planned developments to transform the area into an attractive residential area. The Panel expressed that until anti-social behaviour and on street drinking was properly managed that the investments in the town centre may be less effective and that resolving the issue should be a high priority.

Simon Taylor and Peter Thompson - Economic Resilience Project Manager, responded to the questions asked by the Panel. In regard to the retail strategy, both acknowledged that a focus on retail alone would not achieve all objectives. Peter Thompson further advised the developments were to bring a combination of services, including business, food and beverage offers to the town centre to encourage people to visit. It the vision for the town centre will be a unique environment with a local feel to the place. Peter also agreed that the issues around anti-social behaviour needed to be addressed so that the Arcade would become a place people felt safe in visiting.

Simon Taylor , in response to a question regarding the grant revival scheme, acknowledged that there had been improvements, but nonetheless careful consideration needed to be given to each business to ensure their success.

In response to the Panels concerns about anti-social behaviour in and around the Town Park, Simon Taylor advised that work was ongoing to address the issues with the police and community groups and noted that there needed to be a multiagency approach.

The Panel asked further questions around encouraging new tenants and traders into the Arcade. Peter Thompson advised work on this had already started in partnership with Arcade Gooseberry group. An early marketing campaign and website had been set up and was already generating some interest from businesses. Once the plans were approved and a definite proposition was made available then work would begin to actively target traders.

Simon advised the view was to produce a marketing strategy to promote Dewsbury Town Centre and added that this would be a great opportunity for the town board to lead on, as champions for the town. Peter Thompson explained that research had been carried out in relation to people's attitudes towards the markets. A high

percentage of responses identified if the proposed works were carried out more people would want to come to Dewsbury.

In relation to the Fieldhouse project, the Panel raised the importance of having mixed income homes and spaces available. In response Simon Taylor shared the living town concept for both towns, and explained that with public sector investment, the plans could potentially create a new housing market for Dewsbury. Peter Thompson further advised on the developments regarding the heritage of the building, providing the right quality and large accommodation space.

RESOLVED: The Panel noted the Dewsbury Town Centre Update and thanked the presenting officers for their contributions.

9. Work Programme 2021/22

The Panel considered its work programme for 2021/22 and noted that various Regeneration programmes were to be planned into the timetable. As a result of the additional items, it was agreed that consideration was to be given to holding an additional meeting of the Panel.

The Panel requested that the Kirklees Homes and Neighbourhoods (including estate management) update be brought forward in the work programme if possible. Whereas the ad-hoc Panel was more focused on the High Rise Flats, the Panel wanted to see a more general update on the transfer of KNH to Council management to understand how this went, and to understand what the future plans and ambitions were.

There were also some concerns about the provisional timing for the Winter Maintenance Programme. The Chair suggested that if an additional meeting could be scheduled, that it may be possible to build additional capacity to schedule the specified updates earlier in the year.

RESOLVED: The Panel noted the work programme, and it was agreed for Jodie Harris Principal Governance and Democratic Engagement Officer, to arrange an additional meeting of the Panel.

AOB

No other Business.