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KIRKLEES COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Tuesday 3rd August 2021

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

14 Membership of Committee

All Members of the Committee were in attendance.

15 Minutes of Previous Meetings

The minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 19th May and 15th June 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

16 Interests

No interests were declared.

17 Admission of the Public

All items were considered in public session.

18 Deputations/Petitions

No deputations or petitions were received.

19 Public Question Time

No public questions were received.

20 Leader of the Council Priorities 2021-22

Councillor Shabir Pandor, the Leader of the Council gave a presentation in respect of his portfolio priorities. Jacqui Gedman, the Chief Executive was also in attendance.

Councillor Pandor highlighted the following points in respect of the Council's response to the pandemic:

- The value of the approach whereby Council staff, Councillors, partner organisations, including the voluntary sector, and communities had worked together was recognised.
- The pioneering work undertaken in respect of Covid testing and vaccination centres, alongside partners in the health sector.
- Significant business grants support had been rolled out to local businesses.
- Core services, such as social care, children's services and refuse collection had remained operational throughout.

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In addition, he reported the following achievements:

- A new dementia-friendly library service had been established in Fartown.
- The Kirklees Climate Commission had been established, further to a resolution of Council, and a two-day Youth Summit held to engage with young people about climate issues.
- Investment of £2 million was to be made into new electric/hybrid vehicle fleet and electric vehicle public infrastructure.
- A Youth Engagement Service had been established.
- There had been a focus on apprenticeships, with the aim of engaging 1,700 participants during the life of the project.
- Refurbishment and extension of respite care facilities had been undertaken, to assist families dealing with complex care needs.
- Work was being undertaken with the Local Government Association to put the case forward at a national level for adult and children's services funding.
- The Adult Social Care Vision had been endorsed and the Children's Transformation Plan continued to be implemented.
- Large scale investment plans had been approved, including the Huddersfield Blueprint and Dewsbury Masterplan. Work was also being progressed in relation to smaller centres, improvements to the Penistone Line and the Transpennine hub.

Questions and comments were invited from Committee Members, with the following issues being covered:

- The Youth Engagement Service had been established to work directly with young people and their families, with a focus on providing information and support to empower them to make decisions and implement positive changes to their lives.
- Other priority areas related specifically to children and young people included: a focus on improving learning outcomes and closing the attainment gap; fulfilling transformation ambitions, such as those in respect of special educational needs provision; and ensuring that young people have the ability and skills to live independently. The introduction of 'family hubs' would facilitate the offer of a wide range of support for children and young people across Kirklees.
- In respect of the Peer Challenge feedback in relation to the roles of Cabinet Members and senior officers; examples were given of the establishment of policy by the Cabinet in a number of areas, such as the Investment Plan for Huddersfield, Dewsbury and smaller towns; inclusivity and diversity; the development of Kirklees role within the West Yorkshire Combined Authority to ensure that the district benefited from large infrastructure schemes; and the Penistone Line bid submission. It was recognised that there may be some work to do but it was considered that the Cabinet and its Members were in control of the organisation and taking the lead, whilst recognising the importance of working in a collaborative manner.
- The introduction of the dementia-friendly library was welcomed; there was a need for more such spaces.
- The Climate Commission needed to be progressed as soon as possible.

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- Thanks were expressed to all staff who had made sure that services continued during the pandemic and it was acknowledged as important that they now had a chance to rest and recover.
- The first meeting of the Climate Commission had recently taken place.
- In response to a question about support to small businesses, Councillor Pandor explained that he would be taking a lead on business, economy and innovation matters for the West Yorkshire Combined Authority and would look to provide opportunities for all businesses. The importance of small and medium business enterprises for the economy was recognised; the West Yorkshire Mayor had recently visited Huddersfield and support for local businesses had been one of the issues that had been discussed. The Mayor would be taking a lead on the Economy Recovery Board and Plan.
- In respect of support for the real living wage, a recently launched initiative, across a number of the northern city regions, would not only consider the implementation of the real living wage but would also look at working conditions and how to be a good employer.
- In terms of business and economy ambitions specific to Kirklees, the aims were to ensure that the workforce had the right skills and to secure availability of quality, high paid jobs. There was a need to ensure that the right conditions existed to allow for new small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to form and to develop their chances to link into national transformations such as those associated with climate change. There was also a need to retain the right businesses in the right locations and to continue to support the key anchor institutions.
- In response to queries about reviewing the effectiveness and value for money of work commissioned by the Council to undertake jobs such as filling potholes, it was explained that the background of cuts in funding over a number of years was a considerable problem. Procurement practices were in place and were transparent and accountable. Reference was made to a related piece of work, undertaken a few years previously, and Councillor Pandor agreed that there was a need to identify the best way possible to undertake such tasks.
- In respect of progress in respect of the Council working with the business community, it was explained that the Council was looking to ensure sustainability and encourage investment. An example was given of an initiative which aimed to revitalise local shopping centres. A Business Engagement Strategy was in development, in partnership with the Combined Authority. Links with the private sector and partnership with the Combined Authority were important in this area to ensure that the approach was inclusive and that standards were developed across the region.
- Engagement with the business community was part and parcel of the work being undertaken on regeneration. The Business Forum and representatives of the business community, from various sectors, had met with the Mayor when she visited.
- In terms of Councillors being at the heart of the organisation and how this could be taken ensured post pandemic, Councillor Pandor explained that, as part of the place based working approach, citizen engagement principles were being developed and Councillors would be central to this process. Plans were in place through the Place Partnership Leads to make a difference on the ground and Councillors were involved the process of making this happen.

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- In respect of plans for other town/village centres; although there were limited resources; consideration would be given to what could be done. Significant data gathering and planning would need to be undertaken prior to any decisions being made.
- In response to concerns about the delivery of major highway, regeneration and infrastructure projects on schedule and how engagement would be undertaken with the wider Council membership on these decisions, it was explained that a Workforce Development Plan was being put into place, to ensure that the right staff and resources were in place to deliver programmed projects. An example of ongoing engagement was highways officers contacting Ward Councillors in respect of their priorities. It was proposed that ideas to assist with recruiting the right staff and timely delivery could be explored at the Leading Members Group.
- Capacity in other areas across the authority was also of concern, including the potential impact of this on existing staff.
- In respect of Cabinet's plans to maximise the consequential benefits of the Transpennine Rail upgrade it was stressed that the wider benefits of such schemes were always considered. In that particular case the Portfolio Holder was keen to engage young people to develop their skills and contractors would be encouraged to take local initiatives forward and also to work with local community groups on creative projects.
- In relation to the adoption of the real living wage; anything that will enable the Council become an even better employer was to be welcomed and such a move would also help to promote the message the private sector. The social and business value associated with in being a good employer was recognised.

The Chief Executive commented in respect of the Workforce Development Plan and the work to achieve the challenging ambitions set by the Cabinet for the next few years. She explained that the pandemic had had a significant impact on working practices but also in respect of people reconsidering their life decisions. There was currently a huge demand for people with technical skills and a number of pieces of work were ongoing in respect of talent management and ensuring that Kirklees was an employer of choice and remained an attractive organisation to potential employees. One of the benefits of the new ways of working was that people did not need to live as close to their place of work and the organisation needed to ensure that it could benefit from this.

It was confirmed that the Inclusion Commission was a priority that was well supported within the Council and fell within the inclusivity and diversity heading.

Resolved –

That Councillor Pandor be thanked for attending the meeting to discuss his portfolio priorities and that he be invited to a future meeting of the Committee to update Members on progress.

21

Our Council Plan

Kate McNicholas, the Head of Policy Partnerships and Corporate Planning gave a presentation in respect of the development of the latest version of 'Our Council Plan'.

Kate highlighted the following points:

- It was anticipated that a draft of the refreshed plan would be completed by the end of September.
- The refresh would take the plan up to Spring 2023 with the aim being to undertake a full review for that point forward.
- The well-established shared outcomes were to be retained.
- The plan would be updated to reflect the emphasis on people, partners and place that had further developed through the pandemic.
- Three new values had been introduced in the 2020 refresh; inclusion, kindness and pride and these were to be reviewed to consider if any development, refining or amendment would be appropriate.
- Tackling inequalities had also been introduced as a 'mission critical' issue and there was a need to now embed this.
- There were a number of other areas of development to be included such as: the 'citizen's outcome', to measure whether citizens felt able to influence what happens in their local place; the approach to recovery planning; and the organisational priorities as they aligned to the outcomes.
- In response to concern that there had been insufficient engagement with Councillors previously, in refreshing the plan, the leaders of the political groups had been offered the facility to have an input at an early stage.
- The refreshed plan would be submitted for consideration by the Corporate Scrutiny Panel, prior to progression to Cabinet and Council for endorsement.
- Alongside the refreshed plan, a progress report would be produced which would set out; changes against population level indicators, delivery against ambitions and other key achievements.
- In looking forward, connections would be made to the Economic and Health & Wellbeing strategies and the development of a new Inclusive Communities Framework.

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

- Councillors should be asked for their view on the three new values introduced last year.
- The opportunity to have an input to the refreshed plan was welcomed.
- In response to a comment that priority should be given to using and supporting locally owned/managed businesses to maximise the amount of money that would then be retained within the local economy, it was explained that the Economic Strategy did have, and would continue to have, an emphasis on the inclusive economy and growing productivity. The importance of local businesses as an element of the economic recovery plan had been recognised. It was also considered that there may be opportunities associated with different business models, such as social enterprise.

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- It was acknowledged that 'we're kirklees' was an internal branding intended to reinforce values and pride for staff; but perhaps did not sit comfortably externally and with the place-based approach.
- The need for a specific offer for youth, in light of the particular disadvantages they had experienced during the last few years, had been recognised. The plan would reflect the ongoing recovery and impact, across many areas, for young people. The 'best start' outcome and increased recognition of the importance of life course would capture this approach.
- The 'effective and efficient' outcome had particular relevance for Councillors as they were approached by residents when the system did not work. It was believed that the citizen's outcome should help to measure performance against this outcome and whether the Council was 'working with' rather than 'doing to'. Work was in progress to determine how the citizens outcome could be measured. A number of helpful tools were already in place, such as the CLIK (Current Living in Kirklees) survey, and it was likely that it would also incorporate Place Standard results and intelligence from Councillors.
- In relation to questions about progression of a sustainable economy and community wealth building, it was explained that over the past twelve months the focus had been towards embedding this approach into wider economic regeneration activity and the work on social value. The Inclusive Economy Group had to pause during the response to the pandemic but consideration was being given to how this could be incorporated into a revitalised and sustainable economic partnership.
- The Fair Work Charter was recognised as an important piece of work to develop with colleagues across the wider northern region.
- It was believed that there would be a strong emphasis on social enterprise and co-operatives at sub-regional level and there was considerable good practice in Kirklees to build upon.
- Further information could be provided in respect of customer experience and the ongoing work on how the Council could support customer access to services.

Resolved –

- (1) That officers take account of the points made by Members of the Committee in working on the refresh of 'Our Council Plan'.
- (2) That further information in respect of how the citizen's outcome will be measured be provided, once this work has been further developed.

22 Kirklees Scrutiny Work Programme 2021-22

The Chair of each of the Scrutiny Panels and the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee gave a brief outline of their work programmes for 2021/22 and upcoming meetings.

Resolved –

That the Work Programmes be agreed and that thanks be expressed to all Panel Members for the work undertaken in the development of these plans.