

Economy and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Panel

Tuesday 7th September 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:

David Glover, Senior Responsible Officer, Economy and Skills
Simon Taylor, Head of Development and Master Planning, Growth and Housing
David Shepherd, Strategic Director, Growth and Regeneration
Mark Scarr, Head of Highways
Sue Proctor, Service Director – Highways and Street Scene, Environment and Climate Change
Kathryn Broadbent – Operational Manager, Street Scene and Housing
Chris Dows – Group Engineer, Economy, and Infrastructure

Observers:

Councillor Peter McBride
Councillor Paul Davies
Councillor Naheed Mather

Apologies:

No Apologies were given.

1. Membership of the Committee/ Apologies

There were no apologies received.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Panel considered the minutes of the previous meeting held on 24 August 2021.

The Panel noted that in relation to the A62 to Cooper Bridge Corridor Improvement Scheme that there needed to be a specific time scale (i.e.- years, months) for developments included in the Minutes.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 24 August 2021 were agreed as a correct record subject to the inclusion of the aforementioned information.

3. Interests

No Interests were declared

4. Admission of the Public

Items 1 to 9 were considered in the public session. It was advised that Item 10 - Waste Disposal Commercial Offer was to be considered in private by virtue of the reports containing information which falls within a category of exempt information as contained in Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation Order) 2006).

5. Deputations/Petitions

No deputation or petitions were received.

6. Public Question Time

No questions were received from the public.

7. Update on the Cultural Heart, Part of the Huddersfield Blueprint

The Panel considered a report setting out the progress of the Cultural Heart programme which was presented by David Glover, Senior Responsible Officer-Economy and Skills and David Shepherd, Strategic Director, Growth and Regeneration.

Cllr Peter McBride - Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Cllr Paul Davies - Cabinet Member for Corporate were also in attendance. Cllr McBride gave an overview of the Cultural Heart explaining that it was an ambitious programme which aimed to transform the town centre of Huddersfield. Due to the complexity, of the developments the Council had employed consultants to provide guidance on various aspects of the plan, such as costing and staging, for example. Cllr Davies explained that reflecting local culture was a priority of the scheme, and engagement with local people was essential to create a town centre which celebrated what Kirklees had to offer, built local esteem, and established Kirklees as a place nationally. The plans also included a focus on sustainability and the creation of a greener town centre.

David Shepherd advised that the Cabinet had identified accelerated delivery of the Cultural Heart as a priority. To achieve this, a 'Gateway System' had been designed to ensure that Cabinet continued to lead the process at each critical stage of its delivery. Using this approach, the scheme could not progress through the identified 'Gateways' without Cabinet approval.

David Glover gave a presentation which set out an overview of the Huddersfield Blueprint and the Cultural Heart and the progress to date. It was noted that:

- The Huddersfield Blueprint was a £250m programme launched in 2019 and included 24 core regeneration projects.
- The Cultural Heart programme was one of 4 flagship projects within the Blueprint
- The purpose of the Cultural Heart programme was to reset Huddersfield Town Centre through the introduction of a new event space and food court, a high quality urban park, a modified or new library, an art gallery and museum, improved connections to the university and new car parking facilities.
- Cabinet approved for the for the scheme to progress to Gateway 2 on the 22nd June 2021.

- The approved report set out the strategy for developing the Strategic Outline Case (Gateway 1), a robust master plan and the Outline Business Case (Gateway 2) .
- November 2021 was the target for Gateway 1. To meet this, work was ongoing such as stakeholder consultations, procurement of Architects and Engineers, heritage impact assessments and initial planning consultations.
- July 2022 was the target for Gateway 2 and the total estimated timescale for completion of the programme was from 2021 to 2026.
- The programme had an estimated total value of between £170m and £200m.
- A sustainability review had commenced to ensure the development of the Cultural Heart was in line with new and existing Council policies.
- This included plans to connect the Cultural Heart with the proposed town centre heat network and electricity project to reduce the town centres carbon footprint.
- Social value was also important and increased social opportunities would become deliverable as the project moved into the construction phase.

Questions and comments were invited from Panel Members and the following issues were raised.

In response to a question about ensuring Cabinet's oversight throughout the process (referring more specifically to recommendations and the scheme of delegation in the report), David Shepherd advised that the recommendations in terms of delegation were made to ensure Cabinet's key priority of accelerated delivery.

The Panel highlighted the importance of measurable environmental outcomes. David Shepherd responded saying that it was important to consider resilience for the future throughout the delivery of the programme. This was to be achieved through building to exacting environmental standards, and the plans to link the Cultural Heart to any future district heat and electricity network to ensure that energy comes from the most sustainable sources. The development of a travel plan also aimed to allow visitors to access the town centre in sustainable ways by encouraging active travel and by providing sufficient electric vehicle (EV) charging points.

The Panel asked what changes had been made since the Blueprints introduction in 2019. David Shepherd explained that it was there could be positional changes that would be identified through site interrogation as developments progressed but assured members that they would be informed of any changes.

Responding to concerns about the strain on internal and external council services as resources were drawn into Huddersfield, David Shepherd agreed it was important to ensure that other regeneration projects across Kirklees were not hindered by the delivery of the Cultural Heart. A team of external consultants had been established to work alongside the officer teams to provide support. Cllr McBride empathised that in recognising the size, scale and the complexity of the proposals that external expertise had been commissioned to provide guidance and feedback on the delivery of the programme. Cllr Davies added further assurance that Cabinet understood and took on board accountability for the project.

The Panel asked further questions about stakeholders and the provision of market based information. David Shepherd explained that key stakeholders included the Huddersfield Bid (business improvement district), the Civic Society, the Huddersfield University, Public Sector Partners (i.e.- police and health partners), educational providers as well as all elected members. Work was also ongoing with the Mayor of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority to ensure that the Cultural heart was integrated with a co-ordinated stream of investment into the town centre.

In the discussion to follow the Panel, suggested that further engagement be undertaken with local groups such as the Street Angels, as well as the Visual Impairment Network and the Guide Dog Association to ensure an accessible town centre. The use of Braille placed in key locations to describe what can be seen was suggested as an example of good, inclusive, and accessible to design.

In response to the question about market based information David Shepherd advised that IPW and Queensbury had been commissioned to provide high level market intelligence, with a particular focus on the event space and food venues, to create a town centre that was successful locally, regionally, at present and in the future.

Responding to Panel members comments regarding inclusivity for all types of visitors, David Shepherd highlighted that designing welcoming, well maintained and safe spaces and facilities were essential. Inclusivity was to be factored into the wider travel plan to break down any mobility barriers that might prevent a person from accessing the town centre. The Panel agreed that the transport plans needed to receive the same amount of focus and planning as the physical creation of the town centre.

The Panel also welcomed comments about the heat and electricity district network but wanted to know what other options were being considered to ensure sustainability, and in the discussion to follow, the use of solar panels and wind turbines were suggested. David Shepherd agreed that it was important to continue to review the scheme as it developed to ensure it supported the Councils Climate Emergency target to be net 0 by 2038. It was acknowledged that there would be financial implications involved and so it was important that the Cabinet were well informed throughout the process.

The Panel highlighted welcomed the plans to create a high quality urban park and expressed in relation to place-shaping that it was important to be ambitious to create a town centre that Kirklees could be proud of and a place that people wanted to visit.

The Panel also requested that:

- The link from the Lawrence Batley Theatre to the Cultural Heart was defined and made clear in future reports.
- Regular quarterly progress reports be provided to the Panel.
- That consideration was given to the issue of surface water in the early design phases.

In response to a question about communications and engagement with the public, Cllr Davies explained that the communications strategy would take a multifaceted approach, and the Council was seeking expertise on how to ensure meaningful

engagement with the public. In the discussion to follow, the Panel suggested that a 3D model of the Cultural Heart be displayed in Huddersfield Town Hall to communicate and engage with residents who don't have internet access.

David Shepherd responded to a question concerning the demolition of concrete with embedded CO2. He agreed that the correct disposal of concrete was important, but also highlighted that some concrete was listed. In such cases, this concrete would be preserved. Other options included the effective reuse of concrete such as in road building programmes. It was important to consider sustainable building materials going forwards. Linking to the discussion about measurable outcomes, David noted that it would be important to measure both the immediate carbon impact and the lifetime carbon impact of the town centre.

The Panel also suggested:

- That consideration be given to providing better narrow boat facilities , such as moorings to allow people to visit the town by boat. It was suggested that engagement be held with the Canal and Riverbank Trust
- That the town centre be created and marketed in a way that encouraged visitors to explore the surrounding towns and villages across Kirklees.

David Shepherd welcomed the Panels suggestions, explaining that the museum offer could be a used to increase visitor interest in other areas of Kirklees. In response to a question about making the town centre unique, David added that plans to design green spaces in a way which highlighted Kirklees's rural character within an urban setting could be the towns unique selling point.

RESOLVED –

The Panel noted the contents of the report and requested that the following key observations and recommendations be noted:

- 1) In relation to sustainability and social values, the Panel requested that the correct metrics were put in place to measure outcomes.
- 2) The Panel noted that it was important to focus on the development of sustainable travel options, such as active travel and EV facilities, but that there also needed to be adequate parking facilities to meet current demand.
- 3) In relation to communications, the Panel noted that it was important to ensure the purpose and vision for the Cultural Heart was made clear to all stakeholders, including those without internet access.
- 4) The Panel suggested that engagement be undertaken with the following local groups: the Street Angels, the Visual Impairment Network , the Guide Dog Association and the Canal and Riverbank Trust.
- 5) The Panel requested that the link from the Lawrence Batley Theatre to the Cultural Heart was included in future reports.
- 6) The Panel noted the importance of elected accountability and scrutiny and agreed that regular quarterly written progress reports be provided to the Panel.
- 7) The Panel noted that consideration should be given to the issue of surface water in the early design phases.

- 8) The Panel suggested that the town centre is built and marketed in a way that encourages and attracts visitors to the surrounding towns and villages across Kirklees.

8. Review of Winter Maintenance Services and the Link to Planning

The Panel considered the update on Review of Winter Maintenance Services and the Link to Planning presented by Mark Scarr- Head of Highways, Sue Proctor -Service Director, Highways and Street Scene, Environment and Climate Change, Kathryn Broadbent – Operational Manager, Street Scene and Housing. Chris Dows – Group Engineer, was also in attendance in relation to the link to planning and Cllr Paul Davies - Cabinet Member for Corporate were also in attendance.

Kathryn Broadbent gave a presentation to provide the Panel with an update on the provision of winter maintenance services and information on the link with planning and highlighted the following key points:

- In 2021/22, the winter services were planned to operate for 27 weeks (extended from 24 weeks) from 18th October 2021 to mid-April 2022.
- There were 25,000 tonnes of salt in stock (more than the minimum requirement) and the service looked after over 1,200 miles of road network.
- The Audit Commission recommended that Councils should grit between 24% and 38% of their road networks.
- Kirklees treated about 53% of its road network, exceeding the national average (30%) and the Audit Commission's recommendations in order to reflect the districts challenging typography.
- The normal gritting network consisted of main roads, main bus routes and steep routes that provided important links to main roads. The service was not responsible for private streets.
- Gritting action was informed by a specialist forecast and the predictions of 4 weather stations placed in various locations across Kirklees.
- Gritting took place on a forecast for freezing temperatures as road salt worked best when applied in advance of any snow fall or ice formation.
- On marginal nights there were night patrols that checked the conditions (reporting back to the senior decision makers) and undertook localised gritting.
- Usually gritting took place at 5am and 6pm, before and after rush hour.
- In response to severe weather, operation switched from normal activities to concentrating ploughing efforts on main road and supporting emergency services.
- As severe weather settles, work would be undertaken alongside operational teams within the council, (i.e.- street sweeping and bins) to focus on getting back to business as normal.
- The recovery would focus on clearing key locations and prioritising access to hospitals, health centres and schools.
- A key priority was keeping people informed about winter weather and to encourage early preparation.
- The Twitter account, @kirkleeswinter, for example, was a well-known method of communication with the public, where regular updates were posted about the decisions taken, and gritting/night patrol activities.

- The Council supported community gritting groups who helped vulnerable people by clearing roads and pavements locally to premises where elderly/disabled residents live and receive services.
- There was an engagement session planned with the 24 local community gritting teams to identify how the support and information provided to them may be improved and to increase the number of groups in Kirklees.
- The Council provided grit piles to farmers helped to clear lanes which were not on priority gritting routes supporting small communities and rural Businesses.
- There were over 1450 grit bins in Kirklees to meet local Councillor's priorities
- Engagement was to be undertaken with Councillors to prepare bins and their locations for winter.
- Schools were provided with key messages to provide to parents/carers to keep them informed, and information about school closures was published on the Councils website.

In response to the link to planning, Kathryn explained there was no specific consideration to routine winter maintenance, however all adoptable layouts were assessed to ensure waste collection vehicles can access developments. Highways had smaller vehicles that could be used in tighter residential estates if gritting or snow clearance was needed. During extreme weather and if resources permit – "hand grit" teams will be deployed in some residential areas

In the discussion to follow the Panel highlighted that there were significant housing developments across the district and asked how many would not be included on a gritting route. Concerns were also raised about Shepley health centre which was not on a priority to gritting route. In respect of the routes gritted and the number of local grit boxes, it was highlighted that it was important to build capacity for winter maintenance alongside the growth in housing.

Sue Proctor responded on the issue of housing developments and reassured the Panel that 53% of the network was gritted and this was for the benefit of all residents in Kirklees. This was not extended to new housing developments, and this was a common approach taken nationally and regionally. Parked cars on residential streets were also an issue, alongside that due to lack of vehicle traffic gritting was not as effective on these streets as regular traffic was required to activate the grit.

The Panel highlighted that the 53% of roads included in the gritting network would be reduced year by year as the local network increased alongside housing developments. In respect of grit bins, concerns were raised about communities being less able to support themselves unless more bins were provided. The Panel also expressed that the lack of bins put increased pressures on ward councillors.

Sue Proctor took on board the Panels comments acknowledging that prioritising where to grit was difficult , but all services were currently stretched to capacity and during periods of severe weather the priority was on keeping the network running and keeping people safe. In order to change/ expand the gritting network a full service review would need to be undertaken.

The Panel requested that Cabinet Member, Cllr Paul Davies, raised the issue with the Cabinet. In response Cllr Davies acknowledged the challenges around housing

growth, resources and capacity and agreed to discuss the Panels concerns further with the Strategic Director for Environment and Climate Change and the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Environment.

The Panel noted that primary schools in Kirklees were commonly located on narrow side roads which were subject to high levels of footfall/traffic and asked about what was being done to keep residents accessing schools safe.

Kathryn Broadbent explained that 66% of schools were within 50 metres of a main gritting route but appreciated that a number of primary schools were located on side roads. There were several primary schools with grit bins which the Council provided. Parents and schools worked together to distribute the grit and the Council encouraged that with the correct snow gear that children could get to school safely while enjoying the snow. The Panel welcomed comments agreeing it was important to allow children to learn through playing in snow in a safe way.

In the discussion to follow, the Panel highlighted that people feel safe when they have a grit bin nearby, and that there were concerns about how residents might feel if grit bins were to be moved from one location to another. The Panel further requested that a map be provided to ward councillors which showed the location of grit bins. A question was also asked about the issue of the excessive emptying of some grit bins and how this could be prevented.

Kathryn Broadbent explained that maps (showing the locations of grit bins) would be provided to ward councillors at an upcoming engagement session. Kathryn agreed that grit bins required communities to move and place grit but explained that the council did assess how much grit was being used and highlighted that in some cases, the grit was underused. In relation to the issue of emptying of grit bins Kathryn explained that the bins were open to public use on a trusting basis that grit would be shared fairly amongst communities.

Responding to further concerns raised about the new housing developments, Kathryn highlighted that some large residential developments are managed by companies which maintain shared areas and there is an arrangement where those companies will provide grit bins to those residents and highlighted this could be an option to be perused on larger developments.

Mark Scarr expressed his understanding of the concerns around grit bins and on ensuring that the grit was used in the location it was provided for. He also explained that some research had been undertaken in respect of grit bins in other local authority areas. This data had shown that Kirklees provided significantly more grit bins than neighbouring authorities. The Panel noted that this was positive, but it was important to consider population sizes of other local authorities in comparison to the amount of grit bins needed.

The Panel asked what criteria was used for certain side/B roads explaining that over the previous winter period that there were reports of public service workers being unable to get to work safely as they lived on side roads which were not gritted.

Kathryn Broadbent explained that in periods of severe winter weather that the first priority was to stabilise the main gritting route before clearing other streets taking a planned and co-ordinated approach with other highways teams such as waste disposal to get back to business as normal as quickly as possible. Where the Service were made aware of a significant number of key workers and emergency staff who were unable to get to work safely, hand-gritting teams may be deployed where resources allowed.

Considering the concerns raised during the discussion, the Panel put forward the need to reassess the existing policy and recommended that the Cabinet considered whether winter maintenance could be an item for growth in the budget.

The Panel further highlighted that active travel routes required specific maintenance during winter and work needed to be done to ensure these were safe and kept clear. In respect of the link to Planning, the Panel suggested that a supplementary planning document (SPD) be provided placing the onus on development companies to provide grit bins to developments of a certain size.

Sue Proctor responded to comments about grit piles and advised that the Council worked with communities to help them understand how to use the resource. Recognised the importance of ensuring the grit bins were filled regularly but reiterated that due to the high number of grit bins in Kirklees that it could take up to 3 weeks to refill them all, whilst dealing with other issues such as highways repairs and clearing with snow and ice on priority routes. Expressed understanding to Panel members concerns and the value of their input. In respect of the issue of active travel, Sue acknowledged that this was a new priority and challenge to the highway's authority in accordance. The new demand of the service came alongside the climate change agenda and recognised the importance in maintain active travel routes.

Chris Dows responded to the Panels question on the scope of what can be included under a section 106 or a supplementary planning document in relation to large housing developments and winter maintenance. He advised that providing grit bins was not required to make a planning test but suggested that this issue needed clarifying further with planning policy officers.

RESOLVED:

The Panel noted the contents of the report, and it was agreed that:

1. A network review be undertaken in respect of the criteria required for roads to be included on a gritting route.
2. The Cabinet should assess the current policy for winter maintenance and consider this as an item for growth in the budget.
3. The Strategic Director for Environment and Climate Change and the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Environment be informed of the challenges around housing growth, resources and capacity for winter maintenance.
4. Clarification be provided to the Panel in respect of the scope for winter maintenance provisions in Supplementary Planning Documents and Section 106 Notices.
5. The maintenance of Active travel routes during winter should be provided for.

6. A response be made to Cllr Taylor in respect of Shepley Health Centre.

9. Work Programme 2021/22

The Panel considered its work programme for 2021/22

RESOLVED: The Panel noted the work programme.

10. Waste Disposal Interim Arrangements

The Panel noted that Item 12- Waste Disposal Interim Arrangements was to be considered in private session as per the reasons set out under Item 11.

11. Exclusion of the Public

The Panel noted that under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business, on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information, as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

Councillor Bolt declined to agree and exited the meeting. The Panel agreed to consider the report in private.

12. Waste Disposal Interim Arrangements

The Panel considered the report **Waste Disposal Interim Arrangements** in private session as per the above reasons.

AOB

No other Business.