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KIRKLEES COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Tuesday 28th September 2021

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

23 Membership of Committee

All Members of the Committee were in attendance.

24 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 3rd August 2021 were agreed as a correct record

An update was provided in relation to the item on 'Our Council Plan' (Minute 21), as follows:

- The latest draft had been discussed at an informal Corporate Scrutiny Panel the previous day. Councillor Cooper, Chair of the Panel, reported that the item had generated lots of valuable and varied contributions to influence the final version.
- In respect of the issues identified by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, it was reported that:
Local spend and support for local businesses: the refresh of the Kirklees Economic Strategy, supported by a revised Economic Recovery Plan, would provide the opportunity to identify actions to help build a more inclusive economy.
Customer experience / access to services: the Corporate Scrutiny Panel would be receiving a report, at a later date, in respect of the ongoing work to support customer access to services.

25 Interests

No interests were declared.

26 Admission of the Public

All items were considered in public session.

27 Deputations/Petitions

The Committee received a deputation on behalf of Kirklees Cycling Campaign in relation to the progress report on the Climate Emergency and the Net Zero Road Map.

28 Public Question Time

Questions were asked by Alison Abbott, representing the Save Our Spen Group, in relation to:

- (i) the intentions of the Council in terms of identifying those areas of the district that are already suffering from high levels of pollution and high levels of hospitalisation of people with respiratory issues, and if so, once identified, the plans to influence any increase in these pollution levels in specific areas.
- (ii) what the Council's vision was in terms of ensuring that this district never sees a case like Ella Adoo-Kissi-Debrah, the young girl that had air pollution named as a cause of death.

The Chair explained that the questions were more relevant to the remit of Cabinet than Scrutiny but she would ask the responsible officer to provide a written response and that this would then be reported back to the Committee Members. She also explained that the Council's Air Quality Annual Status Report for 2021 would be submitted for consideration by Scrutiny, in due course.

Councillor Will Simpson, the Cabinet Member responded to the second question.

29 Climate Emergency and Net Zero Road Map Progress Report

The Committee received a report which provided updates in respect of:

- (i) The Climate Emergency and Phase 1 climate emergency actions.
- (ii) The Council's annual internal carbon emissions reporting, against the 40% reduction target set in 2010
- (iii) The development of the Council's road map to becoming carbon neutral by 2038;
- (iv) The Kirklees Climate Commission

Councillor Will Simpson, the Portfolio Holder for Culture and Greener Kirklees, introduced the aspects of the report relating to the Climate Emergency, Phase 1 actions and carbon reduction projects highlighting the following:

- The on-line Youth Climate Festival held in March 2021, with an estimated one thousand participants, and the associated follow-up actions.
- The Kirklees White Rose Forest Programme; aiming for a 35% increase in canopy cover across the district by 2050; largely completed by 2038 with 10% delivered on Council land by 2026.
- Progress in respect of the transition of the Council's fleet to electric vehicles, including charging infrastructure.
- Work on the publicly accessible electric vehicle charging infrastructure across the district, to encourage adoption of electric vehicles.
- Free/lower rate parking offer for electric and low emission vehicles on Council-run car parks.
- Development of the Huddersfield Heat Network.
- Council Housing projects in the district; including pilot schemes in respect of new-build and retrofit to existing properties.

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John Atkinson, Project Manager (Energy and Climate Change) from the Environment and Climate Change Team gave a presentation highlighting the following points:

- The background and current position in respect of the district's net-zero road map. The consultation draft was expected to be completed by late 2021/early 2022.
- The scale of the challenge for Kirklees in reducing its carbon emissions.
- The routes for meeting the target, split into cost-effective and structural change options.
- The proposed next steps, including the development of; a detailed programme of activity, based on the findings of the road map; an effective partnership and collaborative approach; and a communication and culture change strategy.

Shaun Berry, Operational Manager and Martin Wood, Acting Head of Public Protection were also in attendance to answer Members' questions.

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

- In response to a question about the work done since the climate emergency declaration in January 2019 and the declaration of further Air Quality management Areas. it was explained that significant work had been undertaken, particularly in light of the challenging circumstances in the intervening period. For example, the internal 2020 target for reducing carbon emissions by 40% had been exceeded. However, it was accepted that there was much more to do to reach the targets that the Council had set itself and acknowledged that, as the target moved nearer, this may become harder; the 'easy wins' having been taken. Carbon reduction was also something that needed to be undertaken with partners and on a national basis as well as by the Council.
- In respect of the planning and research undertaken to inform the development of a strategic approach to provision of the infrastructure for electric vehicle charging; it was recognised that there was a need to ensure that charging points were put in accessible locations and where they were needed to ensure maximum benefit. A regional spatial study had been undertaken in conjunction with the West Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority.
- The current focus was investment into publicly accessible rapid-charging technology and the next phase would be to commission a study to give detailed consideration to the roll-out of on-street residential charging across the district, which would include consideration of those situations where provision might be problematic, such as for terraced properties.
- The progress being made was welcomed.
- If users were experiencing issues with electric vehicle charging points it was suggested that any concerns be relayed to officers and the Portfolio Holder.
- In response to questions about the reasons for the Passivhaus scheme being a pilot and the limit on the number of properties, it was explained that there had been no significant building of council housing in the district for some time and living in a Passivhaus meant a major change in lifestyle; there were also associated additional costs both initially and for ongoing monitoring.

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- The view was expressed that it would be good for the Council to be bold and ambitious with the development of low-carbon and Passivhaus on council-owned housing sites.
- It was suggested that consideration should be given to full adoption of the Greenhouse Gas Accounting Tool, which should allow better benchmarking.
- Further to a question around how much of what had been achieved to date was due to national de-carbonisation, it was reported that this was one third.
- In terms of WYMCA projects it was questioned how the Council could ensure that these would not be detrimental to its objectives and ambitions in terms of carbon emissions and the role of the Climate Commission in looking at these large strategic projects.
- There was currently no standard for carbon impact assessments and how and when they had to be done. The Combined Authority was working on producing a standard so there would be a standard methodology by which projects could be assessed. The Climate Commission had been asked to take a role in this.
- In respect of free parking for electric vehicles and lower emission vehicles, it was confirmed that all electric vehicles could park for free on council-owned car parks and hybrid vehicles would pay 50%; this had been publicised via the Council's digital communications channels and a press release.
- The retrofit pilot scheme was welcomed, and it would be good to see this scaled-up, if additional funds were available at regional level.
- It was likely that a bigger impact could be achieved through deep retrofitting existing properties than building new properties and this would be an important consideration in prioritising.
- In respect of the impact of Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) and public transport on pollution, and progress in this area; it was explained that the electric technology for HGVs was not as advanced as for smaller vehicles and a watching brief was being kept on developments. Progress had been made in terms of electrification in respect of trains and there had been significant improvement in the age, quality and carbon impact of buses in the district. Bus improvement strategies were being developed at West Yorkshire level and Kirklees fed into this in terms of air quality and carbon reduction impact, with officers in the Major Projects Team being actively involved in this work.
- The Council acted as a consultant to recommend and encourage the use of innovative solutions as part of major projects, to future proof development and try to ensure that when the technology was available, the necessary infrastructure was in place.

Further to a presentation giving a brief background to the establishment of Climate Commission and progress to date, including the recruitment process for commissioners; Professor Peter Roberts, the Chair of the Climate Commission joined the Committee to introduce himself and speak about his vision for the Commission and the expected next steps:

- There was a desire to work with everyone in Kirklees to bring about a better climate change proof future for all.
- The Commission had adopted a supportive, practical and proactive approach and aspired to be a source of independent advice, guidance and evidence.

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- A range of sub-groups had been established to assist public bodies, companies, local community groups and the voluntary sector to deal with the challenges of combating climate change. These groups were formed of Commissioners and co-optees, with a very wide range of expertise, skills and experience and would develop guidance based on best practice.
- The Commission's approach would include reviewing plans, strategies and proposals to ensure that they did not add to the burden of dealing with existing climate change.
- Commissioners would work alongside the relevant parties to ensure that all new developments were planned and constructed to climate change proof standards.
- The Commission would look to identify 'quick wins', with benefits additional to the mitigation of climate change, and to build links with adjacent authorities which would be beneficial to Kirklees and help avoid the export or import of climate change associated problems.

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

- The Climate Commission was welcomed as a great resource for the district.
- In response to a question about the independence of the Commission, it was acknowledged that it may be preferable to establish independent support for the Commission, in time. It was considered that the Commission's independence would be demonstrated by it having a sound basis for its views and not being afraid to express them. The role of providing a critical friend was very important.
- The Commission would be as open and transparent as possible and listen to all interested parties; the Commission was for everyone in Kirklees.
- Active travel had been highlighted as a key area of focus in the road map and the relevant Commission sub-group would also be well placed to consider this issue. There was a need to encourage modal shift and behaviour change and work would be undertaken with residents and local communities to bring this about.
- There was a need to consider how walkable, cyclable, sustainable local communities could be created, formed and supported and how the need to travel could be minimised.
- In terms of the need for capacity building in the voluntary, community and education sectors, this was essential and was why the sub-groups were working towards identifying best practice and how this could be applied in communities. This guidance would also help in addressing the challenges within the road map in a pro-active and positive way. One of sub-groups had been tasked with considering communications and connecting with the wider community.
- In terms of the three-year term of office for commissioners, it was anticipated that the Commission would have a rolling work programme and commissioners could be offered two terms of office, or perhaps more in exceptional circumstances. There would be a need to build and retain experience; Some of the sub-groups had co-opted members which would assist in succession planning and one of the sub-groups would focus on engagement with young people.

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- It was considered that communication should be a two-way thing and the Commission would welcome the views of, and engagement with, the different areas/ communities and interest groups in Kirklees. This involvement and input would be actively sought.
- The proposed approach to engagement was welcomed; it was important that this was accessible and also that it incorporated a diversity of experience and voices from across Kirklees.
- It was acknowledged that there would be need to reflect all communities of Kirklees and also the diversity within communities. This was recognised to include issues such as income and opportunities as well as ethnicity or gender.
- The economic case for investment was evident and there was a need to undertake cost benefit analysis of projects to address climate change issues; most such studies to date had shown that correctly figured solutions tended to come out as carbon positive and cost positive.
- There was no fixed position at this point in respect of the holding of engagement events; the formal launch of the Commission in November would be the first and anyone who wished to be involved would be very welcome so that the Commission could learn what their priorities were and what obstacles they faced in acting now.
- In conjunction with the Combined Authority funding was being sought for a COP26 related event, along with the five other West Yorkshire local authorities, to run a series of small events on projects taking place across the districts and Kirklees intended to showcase the development and establishment of the Climate Commission.

RESOLVED –

(1) That the Chair of the Climate Commission, Cabinet Member and officers be thanked for their attendance and presentations to the Committee.

(2) That officers update the Chair in respect of the Air Quality Annual Status Report for 2021 and Kirklees net zero road map.

30 Work Programme and Agenda Plan 2021-22

The Committee noted the current Work Programme and the date of the next meeting; 9 November 2021.