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KIRKLEES COUNCIL
CORPORATE SCRUTINY PANEL

Monday 8th November 2021

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

Co-optees Philip Chaloner

In attendance: Jonathan Nunn, Strategy Policy Officer
Dave Thompson, Head of Access Strategy and Delivery
Andy Simcox, Service Director, Strategy and Innovation
Jill Greenfield, Service Director Customer and
Communities
Cllr Elizabeth Smaje, Chair of Overview and Scrutiny
Management Committee

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 16th August 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 Leaving the EU Update

Jonathan Nunn, Strategy Policy Officer, provided the Panel with an update on the work to manage the effects of the UK's exit from the EU advising that the last update was provided in December 2020, prior to the end of the transition period and the report before the Panel provides an update on the work since that point.

Corporate Scrutiny Panel - 8 November 2021

In summary, the Panel was advised that once the transition period ended and the implications of the free trade agreement were understood, it was agreed that the scope of the project and the tactical group could be reduced. This reflected the fact that a number of issues were considered to no longer present concerns and the only workstreams retained were those which were still considered to maintain an active concern until July, when key milestones would have passed.

Following the passing of key milestones defined by the EUSS programme and the Free Trade Agreement (FTA), the remaining work streams have completed or have been absorbed into business as usual and the Tactical Group has been dissolved. It was recommended that once the project had progressed to formal closure a final report would be submitted to the Executive Team and subsequently to the Leadership Management Team.

The Panel was informed that it was important to note that in several areas the impact of the Covid pandemic has exacerbated the impact of leaving the EU; for example, the current shortage of lorry drivers where the pandemic prevented large numbers of HGV licence tests occurring reducing the inflow of new drivers while leaving the EU has prevented resulting vacancies being filled by EU nationals. In other cases, the pandemic has complicated mitigating actions. This is particularly the case in the work with communities promoting the EUSS scheme.

The workstreams that were retained in the project since January include:

Business Preparedness – has benefited from the formation of a small group focused on business related issues that included the Chamber of Commerce and Federation of Small Businesses, and the aim is to continue this group. It is anticipated these meetings will continue, on a quarterly basis with a broader membership to consider issues of relevance to local businesses including COVID impacts, and the gathering and sharing of intelligence.

Food Certification - in January it was identified that the Environmental Health Team anticipate two pressures resulting from 1) increased requirement to provide export certificates and 2) the need to undertake checks on imported goods at destination where these have been allowed to pass through ports without checks in order to facilitate free movement of goods. The introduction of most of these checks has been postponed to 1 January 2022. The team will monitor developments as part of business as usual.

Data governance arrangements - the UK had already granted data adequacy to the EU. The risk was not to the ability to send data to the EU but to be able to subsequently retrieve it. Having extended the period from four months to six, the EU granted the UK a data adequacy decision on 28 June avoiding any issues in this area.

EU settlement scheme – the Council continued to work with Kirklees Citizens and Law Centre and other partners to raise awareness of the EUSS scheme and the need to apply by the deadline of 30 June. A breakdown of numbers, shows 14,690 were granted settled or pre-settled status and at the point the statistics were

Corporate Scrutiny Panel - 8 November 2021

released, 2220 were still to be determined. Eight looked after children applied for and have been granted pre-settled status, they need will need to apply for settled status once they reach 18 and a 9th has gained British citizenship. This work will have continuity through a new No Recourse to Public Funds group with a wider remit.

In response the information presented the Panel asked a number of questions including the following:

- What is being done to monitor the people who have acquired pre-settled status?
- What issues are businesses facing with regard to the procurement of goods and fresh food and the product supply chains?

RESOLVED

That Jonathan Nunn be thanked for providing an update on leaving the EU.

8

Kirklees Councils Access Strategy 2021 - 2026

Dave Thompson, Head of Access Strategy and Delivery and Jill Greenfield, Service Director Customer and Communities presented the Kirklees Council's Access Strategy 2021 – 2026 to the Panel.

In summary, the Panel was informed that the access strategy is a refresh and redesign of the previous strategy that had been in place since 2017. Refreshing the strategy has provided an opportunity to build in the needs that the pandemic has highlighted around inequality, isolation and other vulnerabilities for local citizens and communities. Working with a range of partners and services across the council, the aim has been to ensure that the access strategy gets closer to meeting those needs.

There have been many successes with the previous strategy for example the digital by design programme has encouraged more contacts through online channels. Over 140,000 Kirklees citizen accounts that are used on a regular basis for a number of different things have been created. This was one of the key aspects the previous strategy was set to deliver on.

Under the direction of the Modern Organisation Board, work has been undertaken with services across the council, partners, volunteer groups and with communities to identify what they need and what is important to them in relation to access.

The key aims of the new strategy includes:

- Making a positive difference from the first contact, reducing the need for repeated multiple contacts
- Providing more localised services in communities which meet the needs of the communities they serve
- Continuing to develop online and phone services, increasing take up and access
- Co-designing, co-producing, and co-evaluating services with people to ensure a culture of sharing learning, power, and voice

Corporate Scrutiny Panel - 8 November 2021

- Building on the trust that has been developed with partners, volunteer groups and businesses

The key principles:

Getting the basics right – develop the design of service access, the language used and to understand what it means to people. Identify what people want to achieve and how they want us to help them get there

Tackling inequalities – using access to services to address inequalities, vulnerabilities and loneliness including cultural, digital, financial, and other barriers

Offering multiple contact points – recognising that people want choice in how they connect, the communication will extend beyond the traditional channels to include community co-ordinators, social media, community buildings and more. Two pilots have been started one in Ravensthorpe at the Greenwood Centre and the other in the Chestnut Centre.

Working with people – ensuring regular reflection and improvements to processes and arrangements by co-producing services and how they are delivered with the people who access them.

The Panel was informed that there will be challenges in delivering this strategy, particularly in bringing access more localised to where it is needed. Another key challenge will be upskilling and empowering staff to be able to support all customer needs presented, enabling staff to build relationships with specialised services enabling them to act as advocates for customer to get their needs met. Working alongside communities, partners, and others in developing services and improving outcomes.

It is recognised that these are key challenges, and there are some significant challenges for the organisation and this strategy is a five-year strategy for that reason and it is important to get this right.

In response to the information presented the Panel asked a number of questions including the following:

- In respect of reducing the need for repeated multiple contacts by customers it is important to ensure this does not happen. For example, councillors can be contacted by a resident who has already previously contacted another councillor and it could be that three different ward councillors sending in a piece of casework that relates to one issue
- Are staff happy to be upskilled and will all staff be given the training particularly on how they develop their relationships with residents?
- Will there be sufficient capacity to deliver on the strategy which seems very ambitious?

RESOLVED

That Dave Thompson and Gill Greenfield be thanked for providing an update on the Access Strategy