

Contact Officer: Sheila Dykes

KIRKLEES COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Tuesday 19th April 2022

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

73 Membership of Committee

All members of the Committee were in attendance.

74 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 15th March 2022 were approved as a correct record.

The Chair provided an update as follows:

On 5th April 2022, Cabinet had approved the appointment of a specialist company to design, cost, and obtain an implementable full planning permission for the low carbon housing pilot project. The comments made by this Committee, at the meeting on 15th March, had been included within the report. (Minute 67)

75 Interests

No interests were declared.

76 Admission of the Public

All items were held in public session.

77 Deputations/Petitions

No deputations or petitions were received.

78 Kirklees Employment and Skills Plan 2022-2025: 'Aspire, Achieve and Include'

A report was submitted seeking feedback from the Committee in respect of the Kirklees Post-16 Employment and Skills Plan 2022-2025: 'Aspire, Achieve and Include'.

Gillian Wallace, Head of Employment and Skills and David Shepherd, Strategic Director - Growth and Regeneration attended the meeting to introduce the report and gave a presentation highlighting the following:

- This was a co-produced, locally specific plan, which set out how the Council would work with employers and key partners to develop the local employment and skills system over the next three years. The plan aimed to build upon the work already being done and would help to maximise the opportunities arising from devolution and the Levelling Up White Paper.

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee - 19 April 2022

- The Cabinet Member was unable to attend this meeting but was in full support of the plan.
- The plan aimed to ensure that residents of the district had access to the relevant skills pathways and that the workforce needs of Kirklees' employers were met. The plan was expected to evolve over its lifespan; being amended and updated as the work progressed.
- Whilst the pandemic had delayed the production of the plan it had also allowed for a period of reflection and consideration to ensure that the priorities and proposals were the right ones, both for the present and the future.
- This was not an implementation plan; it established a list of priorities and actions, agreed with partners, to act as a focus for a collaborative approach to delivery and the achievement of the vision for Kirklees.
- An outline of the context and background, including linkages and alignment with the Economic Strategy, Kirklees Futures and other Council strategies and plans, and the wider regional structure.
- The timeline and next steps.
- How the plan had developed, drawing on engagement with key stakeholders, including a number of local businesses and education providers, and using data led intelligence.
- The challenges and the need for a collaborative approach, alongside key stakeholders, to successfully address them.
- The four key priority areas; Empowering Our Young People; Digital Inclusion; Supporting Our Communities to Learn; and Progress and Skills for the Future.
- The mechanism for delivery and measurement of outcomes; including the establishment of a Partnership Board.

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

- In respect of the development of 'green skills' to assist in achieving the mayoral pledge to build 5000 sustainable homes; a definition of 'sustainable' would be helpful, to provide clarity and ensure that training was provided to the appropriate level and standards. It was noted that there was a wide range of skill sets associated with this area of growth, ranging from construction techniques to behavioural coaching and financial services and with the correct skills pathways in place, Kirklees residents would be able to benefit from this.
- Retrofitting was considered to be a huge area of demand that could be exploited to provide long term jobs, if the necessary skills were increased.
- There was a general lack of provision of education in respect of money management and life skills.
- The development of the necessary technical expertise to fill Council vacancies where there was a shortage in supply, such as highway engineers, aligned more closely with the Council's Workforce Plan, whereas this plan aimed to increase skills, particularly at Levels 2 to 4, where there were gaps. It was suggested, however, that the opportunity could be taken to raise awareness and to encourage consideration of roles such as this as a potential future career.
- In respect of how the plan and partnership might be used to promote and encourage adoption of the real living wage, it was considered that, in order to drive wages upwards, it was crucial that employers were consulted and engaged so that they felt that they were able to sign up to the plan. Work was being

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee - 19 April 2022

undertaken at a regional level in respect of a Fair Work Charter and consideration would be given to how Kirklees and its businesses could benefit from this. The Council was in a strong position to demonstrate 'what good looks like' and to support other employers to reach that standard.

- The key to higher pay was skills development and progression.
- There was also a need for fairness in terms of earnings and conditions regardless of the level of skills/employment.
- Transport was a key issue so that people were able to access jobs and training opportunities across the district. This plan would sit alongside the Kirklees Transport Strategy, which was to be brought forward later in 2022 and which would align with the West Yorkshire Transport Strategy.
- Assurance was given that officers worked very closely with colleagues from across West Yorkshire to ensure that there was a regional picture.
- It was suggested that there should be representation from young people on the Partnership Board, perhaps a current or recent apprentice, and that thought should be given about how to engage young people about their needs.
- Concern was expressed in respect of how it would be possible for those businesses on the Board to represent the wide range of businesses across Kirklees.
- It was acknowledged that it would be difficult to achieve Board representation for all businesses and that it was therefore important to ensure that all voices were heard either through the work of the Board or the arrangements within the decision-making process. Time to attend meetings was an issue for many businesses; there was a need to make it easy for them, as well as young people, to engage and to ensure that their voices were heard and acted upon.
- The work was data and intelligence-led with skills audits, economic analysis at local and national level, work undertaken by the Combined Authority on growth sectors, and work on re-skilling, at both national and local level, all feeding in.
- This three-year plan needed to fit within a longer-term strategy.
- Consideration could be given to ways in which local employers might be supported to benefit from apprenticeships and achieve positive outcomes for business and young people. If the challenges with apprenticeships for businesses and education/training providers were acknowledged and addressing them was agreed as a priority it would enable a commitment to be given to finding collective and collaborative solutions.
- It was important to ensure that different sizes of business were represented on the Board, that there was a balance between business and learning providers and that a whole system approach was taken, including health and social care representation, in order to provide a proper understanding of barriers.
- Libraries had previously provided assistance to people in accessing digital services and improving digital skills, but also helped to build the confidence to apply for jobs and this was an important element.
- The need to achieve reach across all Kirklees communities, particularly those that might be more excluded, was recognised. There was a need to ensure that there were a number of different pathways available for people, through a range of providers and employers, to achieve a good fit for all, including providing alternative learning opportunities for those that had found that the traditional school environment had not worked for them.

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee - 19 April 2022

- It was noted that a very good range of providers already existed in Kirklees, undertaking work across a range of groups with different needs. C&K Careers was currently undertaking a project to understand and identify the specific needs of young people who were not in education, employment or training (NEET) in the local area.
- The proposed governance arrangements should ensure continued dialogue and a continuous improvement approach.
- In respect of the offer for older people and those who had been out of work for a prolonged period, and who may have difficulty with digital skills, it was noted that there were current programmes working with groups, such as the over-50s, but the need to establish these individuals as a priority group would be considered. It was acknowledged that the numbers had increased and this had become a higher priority as a result of the pandemic.
- The plan set out an agreed list of priorities and actions but did not provide detail of implementation. The next stage was to develop the delivery and action plans, taking account of current programmes of work and how to build on them, with consideration also being given to funding for successful programmes and activities. European funding would be accessed until 2023. Details of the Shared Prosperity Fund had only recently been released and work was being undertaken with colleagues in West Yorkshire to assess the implications and to establish how Kirklees could benefit.
- Clarity was requested in respect of whether the Board would be working to the outcome measures, or the Action Plan, or both and an undertaking was given to check the cross-referencing in the plan. It was considered that if the actions were delivered then progress would be seen on the measures. It was explained that it was likely that further measures would be introduced as the delivery of the plan progressed.
- The Plan referred to the Board considering 'the sustainability of the actions in this strategy, especially those supported by short-term funding' and it was questioned whether this would apply only to those with short-term funding.
- In response to a question about linkages with the Trans-Pennine route upgrade, assurance was given that regular dialogue took place with Network Rail as well as the Combined Authority in respect of large-scale investment programmes. Network Rail expected the Council to set out, in the plan, the benefits for Kirklees communities to become involved and to deliver a training and construction programme. The Trans-Pennine route upgrade was considered to provide real opportunities for Kirklees, including the potential for local people to access employment throughout the programme.
- Construction was expected to increase significantly over the next few years and the Council was engaged in a number of construction programmes, either directly or indirectly, across district. The plan aimed to ensure that employers would be able to recruit local people.
- It was considered that linkages to specialist discussion groups, to illustrate the involvement of wider representation than those who were part of the Partnership Board, were not reflected in the plan.
- The plan would be progressing to Cabinet at the earliest opportunity and the Committee's comments would be communicated in the report.

RESOLVED -

That the points and suggestions raised by the Committee, including those noted below, be taken into account in the development of the Kirklees Employment and Skills Plan 2022-2025:

- The need for clarity in the definition of sustainable homes, to ensure that training is provided to the appropriate level and standards.
- Consideration should be given to the provision of money management and life skills.
- The importance of building capacity; reach across communities; skills progression; upskilling; and the sustainability of jobs.
- Consideration should be given to the provision of support for local employers in respect of apprenticeships.
- The need for a balance of representation on the Partnership Board, a whole-system approach and to hear the voice of different businesses of all sizes.
- The importance of the engagement with young people.
- Prioritisation of unemployed people over the age of 50 as a group.
- Reference to the linkages to specialist discussion groups.

79 Establishment of Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel

The Committee considered a proposal to establish an Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel to facilitate effective scrutiny of a number of the Council's ongoing regeneration projects:

- Huddersfield Blueprint
- Cultural Heart
- Dewsbury Blueprint
- The Small Centres Programme

It was noted that these projects would be take place over a lengthy timescale and it was anticipated that the Panel would facilitate pre-decision, in-depth, scrutiny.

RESOLVED -

That an Ad Hoc Regeneration Scrutiny Panel be established with the Terms of Reference set out in the report, on the basis of a cross-party membership with a 1:1:1:1 ratio.

80 Work Programme 2021-22

The current Work Programme had been circulated.

A schedule of meetings for the new Municipal Year would be sent out shortly after the Annual Meeting of Council on 25th May 2022.

As this was the last meeting of the Municipal Year, the Chair took the opportunity to thank all the Members of the Committee, for their contributions over the last twelve months, and the Governance Officer for the support provided to the Committee.