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## KIRKLEES COUNCIL

### CORPORATE SCRUTINY PANEL

**Monday 21st March 2022**

Present: Councillor Andrew Cooper (Chair)  
Councillor James Homewood  
Councillor Charles Greaves

Co-optees Philip Chaloner

In attendance: Cllr Paul Davies, Cabinet Member Corporate Services  
Andy Simcox, Service Director, Strategy and Innovation  
Terence Hudson, Head of Technology  
Deborah Lucas, Head of People Services  
Michelle Moss, HR Manager  
Eamonn Croston, Service Director, Finance  
Phil Deighton, Head of Commercial Services

Observers: Kristina Parkes

Apologies: Councillor John Taylor  
Councillor Alison Munro

**1 Membership of the Committee**

Apologies were received from Cllr John Taylor and Cllr Alison Munro.

The Lead Member and Panel thanked Philip Chaloner, Voluntary Co-optee for his years of service as a co-optee on the Panel as he would be standing down at the end of the 2021/22 municipal year.

**2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

That the minutes of the meeting held on the 7<sup>th</sup> February 2022, 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.

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### 6 Public Question Time

No public questions were asked.

### 7 Technology Strategy

Terence Hudson, Head of Technology provided an update on the technology strategy. In summary, the Panel was informed that the strategy is split into seven key component parts.

- 1) Getting the basics right - which is about the way services are delivered day-to-day, making sure that everyone is able work. Two years ago, as a result of the first lockdown it was fundamental that the workforce was helped to be able to work from home very quickly
- 2) Enabling resilient and available infrastructure - developing an internet first approach for partnership working built on highly available, ultrafast connectivity with resilient services in key locations across Kirklees. It will require a big shift on core infrastructures such as network and servers
- 3) Commissioning applications fit for the future – this is largely internally facing focusing on the IT systems that that makes the council work
- 4) Using data intelligently and securely – this is to ensure the accurate, secure, and timely collection of data to derive intelligence and value for the council and partners and empower people to make informed decisions, with an emphasis on cyber security and resilience
- 5) Developing inclusive technology and skills - working with partners across sectors, with an aim to invest in new technology and skills to develop a digitally capable workforce and improve skills and opportunities for residents to support them in the internet age
- 6) Connecting people, business and technology – by facilitating significant infrastructure investment across Kirklees to support business growth, inclusive connectivity for people and wide-ranging capabilities via internet connected devices
- 7) Delivering class leading internet services - creating and delivering class leading services designed around the people that use them, in ways that meet the needs and expectations of the internet age.

The Panel was provided with information which reflected on highlights from 2021/22 under the seven key components as follows:

#### Getting the basics right

- Delivered over 1000 laptops and associated technology to support working at home and to refresh office spaces
- Supported Councillors to return to the chamber, concert hall and remotely for hybrid and in person decision meetings

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- Delivered the first iteration of a digital post room to reduce the impact of handling traditional mail

### Enabling resilient and available infrastructure

- Engaged with network consultants to design the core services needed across Kirklees
- Continued the development of assets in Dewsbury to build further high-speed services and resilient services out to Huddersfield

### Commissioning applications fit for the future

- Continued the delivery of a new housing system
- Procured a new adult social care system
- Started the delivery of a hospital to home system

### Using data intelligently and securely

- Diligently covered off many zero-day threats and have protected the council from many cyber related attacks
- Investment is in place to further secure our information assets
- Maintained our accreditation and access to the public sector network (PSN)

### Developing inclusive technology and skills

- Delivered the 'Let's Talk Digital' survey is live and now being promote across Kirklees
- Two digital hubs have been created and over 200 devices have been deployed to support people across Kirklees
- Around 10,000 devices have now been provided to children across Kirklees

### Connecting people, business and technology

- Delivered an immersive experience at Cherry Trees and updated nurse call systems in two residential homes
- Openreach announced 10 more digital exchange upgrades, Virgin Media have upgraded their network and City Fibre continue building
- Delivered EDURoam across all council sites supporting University and College students across Kirklees

### Delivering class leading internet services

- Continued to rapidly deliver services in response to the needs of the pandemic
- Delivered direct debit payments for Garden Waste
- Delivered new internet services for our dispersed workforce

In response to the information presented the Panel made comment and asked the following number questions:

- Setting up the direct debit system for garden waste is good and the technology solution is fine, however will there be help for residents do it online particularly who are unable to do it themselves and don't have anyone to help them?
- There are some households who are struggling financial and probably can't afford access to the Internet how might they be catered for?

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- With the phasing out of the traditional telephones, people will become more dependent on internet connection which requires power how will the elderly with no telephone or access to the internet for example seek help?
- How will all the different kind of applications and services speak to one another for example if an individual rings up with a complaint or query there is currently no option but them to pass queries and issues to different teams and everything being done by email. Will the strategy find a technological solution to allow the matter to be dealt with by the first colleague who identifies the issue?

The Panel welcomed the update acknowledging that this is a five-year strategy and agreed that this should be added to the future work programme.

### RESOLVED

That Terence Hudson and Andy Simcox be thanked for providing an update on the Technology Strategy

#### 8 **Update on the People Strategy and Recruitment Challenges**

Deborah Lucas, Head of People Services provided an update on the People Strategy programme of work and the ongoing recruitment and retention challenges facing the council.

In summary, the Panel was informed that the refreshed people strategy was recently launched. The original plan was to relaunch it in 2021, however the pandemic push back some of the work being undertaken. Much of the learning from the pandemic has helped to inform the refresh of the People Strategy because the world of workers has completely transformed.

The vision is that:

*“We will achieve our shared outcomes through people with the right skills, values and behaviours working in partnership in our places”*

And our four key outcomes are:

- To have highly skilled, flexible, and engaged people
- To have effective and compassionate leadership
- To be an inclusive employer of choice
- To have healthy and well people

The Panel was informed that values and behaviours are at the heart of the people strategy. The aim is to keep the strategy alive, and pledges have been developed to support the outcomes and these will continuously be brought to life through storytelling, case studies and videos and regularly keep communicating these outwardly to the workforce.

Over the life of the people strategy other areas will be developed for example a careers site has already been launched, a gender identity pledge has been

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developed and work is being undertaken with the carers network to develop a pledge around how to support working carers.

Sitting behind the people strategy is a hugely ambitious program of work and during the pandemic, the programme of work kept growing. In September 2021, a programme assurance review was undertaken. The purpose of this review was to understand if the programme would deliver appropriate outcomes, on time and within budget.

Key findings of the assurance review were as follows:

- 19 individual concurrent pieces of work were in flight (a combination of business-as-usual activity, work packages and projects) without clear prioritisation
- People Services capacity to deliver project activity was a significant risk and there was the potential to miss opportunities to realise economies of scale
- Programme scope was not stable

As a result, the People Strategy Programme Board approved the recommendation to rationalise the volume of concurrent activity by prioritising strategic projects that deliver outputs that will inform and provide the foundations for concurrent activity, merge activity working towards the same high-level objective, remove business-as-usual activity from the scope and baseline the programme scope.

One of the biggest programmes of work being undertaken is workforce planning as would be expected. This project aims to ensure that workforce planning is truly embedded across the Council going forward. Workshops are currently being piloted in critical service areas where there are difficulties in recruitment, retention and succession planning. Those areas are being priorities with a suite of support documents, very much intelligence led, using manager intelligence dashboards that help managers understand what their workforce currently looks like and then identify where the gaps might be in terms of the plan going forward.

Another critical piece of work is the 'My Space' project and this links into the Technology Strategy. The aim is to digitally enable the frontline workforce because it has been recognised that it has always been hard to engage with frontline workforce and this really came to the fore during the pandemic. The My Space portal project is focused on the development and delivery of a secure Employment Engagement Portal for the frontline workforce (approximately 3500 employees) to allow for enhanced connectivity with the organisation utilising their own personal device such as a computer, smart phone, or tablet.

Using any digital device, frontline workers will be able to look at things like their pay, the benefits, well-being support packages, development opportunities, jobs, Council messages, and the range of information that is on the intranet.

There is the 'Timewise' project that aims at putting flexibility into roles particular front line roles and that should help with workforce retention and recruitment issues. The pandemic has changed the world of work and whereas previously flexibility might

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have been seen as a benefit, it is now seen as essential, and candidates are looking automatically to see flexibility in jobs.

One project that is important to mention is 'Project Search'. This has been a successful project with the council working partnership with the college, and Real Employment supporting young people with learning disabilities and autism in work placements in service areas. Working with them to find a pathway into employment.

The Panel was informed that coming out of the pandemic, there are pay challenges which are also at a national level. Whilst also reflecting on the workforce there is an increase in labour turnover, and an increase in the number of people retiring probably earlier than they may well have retired. There are, however, positives such as the number of vacancies are, reducing partly because a lot of recruitment is being undertaken and the workforce appears to be moving to a younger cohort.

While there are some positives the challenges are not insignificant and they continue however there are plans in place to address hard to fill roles in areas in particular highways, engineering adults, social care adults and social work. The aim is to develop pathways into employment and to create a talent pool for the future. In addition, to also look at reviewing levels of remuneration and doing some work with local communities to target recruitment and as well targeting doing some recruitment events.

In response to the information presented the following questions were asked:

- The current workforce turnover approximately 9.1% what was it prior to the pandemic?
- The hard to fill roles such as highways, engineering, adult social care and social work do they require a degree or masters level qualification, and if so, is there a way that support can be given to existing colleagues, to retrain as a social worker for example?
- highways seems to be a difficult area to recruit and wonder whether it could be addressed at a regional level maybe in collaboration with other councils to build up the sector?

### **RESOLVED**

That Deborah Lucas be thanked for providing an update on the People Strategy.

## **9 Financial Management Update - Council Capital Plan**

Phil Deighton, Head of Commercial Services provided a high-level financial management update on the Council's Capital Plan incorporating the financial position 2021/22, the multi-year Capital Plan and an overview of governance arrangements supporting the development, prioritisation, and delivery of the Capital Investment Programme.

The Panel was informed that the Council Budget Report was presented to Cabinet on the 1 February 2022 and approved at Budget Council on the 16 February 2022 updated the capital budget for 2021/22 to £161.7m. The budget has since been

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updated with a further £3.2m re-profiled into subsequent financial years mainly due to slippage of schemes.

It is Council that is responsible for approving the capital investment plan and the prudential indicators. It is then Cabinet's responsible for implementing that plan and then service directors manage those programs and projects and make sure that they control them and avoid overspending. While capital can be a seemingly bureaucratic process there is quite a lot of flexibility built into those processes allowing them to be reviewed throughout the year. As there is a lot of risk of material variations in spend profiles that is reviewed and already in 2021/22, £74m of capital has been moved and reprofiled into future years. There is also a procedure which allows the Service Director for Finance under delegate authority to optimise the funding.

The Panel was informed that quarterly reports are taken through Cabinet to report on programmes and projects and as a method of taking amended capital proposals. Business cases are an integral element of the whole process of planning, governance, and approval and then there is the Capital Governance Board that will appraise new proposals for recommendation into the investment plan. The level of detail within a business case is proportionate to the risk and complexity of the project and there are two real main approval processes.

- 1) inclusion in the multi-year plan which is an in-principal approval
- 2) when a formal Cabinet approval is sought to commence and spend the scheme

Business cases are more likely to be much more comprehensive and detailed by the time they go for formal approval because in the life cycle of the projects' development, work will be much more advanced. Whilst the capital planning exercise undertaken is part of the budget process it is also looked at it as part of the year end exercise as it offers the opportunity to review project allocations, funding assumptions and any other emerging priorities.

### **RESOLVED**

That Phil Deighton be thanked for providing a financial management update on the Council's Capital Plan

#### **10 Update on Corporate Portfolio Holder Priorities**

Cllr Paul Davies, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services provided a progress update on the priorities he outlined at a meeting at the start of the municipal year advising that he would be updating on the completed deliverables.

In summary, the following information was provided:

Procurement Strategy - the first draft has been developed and will go through various stages of discussions before it is finalised. The first draft has been delivered in line with the timescales that was originally set out. One of the crucial elements is how to ensure that the strategy is achieving real social value and there has been a

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lot of discussion around this with officers in terms of what it should that look like and how to make it happen particularly with a very significant investments being planned

Access to Service Strategy – this is now in place and the challenge will be delivering on the strategy. Work is being undertaken within the council's own assets such as libraries and other assets, is in terms of creating engagement to bring the Council back into the communities

Communication Strategy - is currently being developed and will be discussed in more detail during the informal session. A key objective that links to the comms strategy and the Access Strategy is demonstrating evidence of increased reach and engagement with citizens

Libraries - continuing with the capital development program and there is a project team in place which is looking at this monthly. There is a focus on the number of libraries and planning a new a significant development in Heckmondwike and investments in Holmfirth and Mirfield and ensuring that the rest of the estate is properly maintained. In addition, the library estate is very much about supporting communities and a focus on creating safe inclusive spaces

Financial Management – while there have been regular updates to the panel on the council financial position, it is important to mention the excellent work that has been undertaken by the Service Director, Finance, and the team in respect of the DSG deficit. They have been working with government agencies to develop an agreement which will help manage the deficit going forward. Without this work the DSG deficit will continue to grow and will be a major risk going forward. This is now in the final stages of being pulled together.

In response to the information presented the Panel commented that an important and often overlooked part of the Council's operations, is the management of the council land and buildings in that there is not enough visibility on the service in terms of the work they do. The Panel agreed that this should be added to the forward work programme.

### **RESOLVED**

That Cllr Davies be thanked for providing a progress update on his portfolio priorities