

# Overview and Scrutiny

## Annual Report

2020/21



# Chair's Foreword

At the start of the 2020/21 municipal year and after Council AGM, four Scrutiny Panel Chairs were re-appointed and I would like to thank them for their hard work during another difficult year. Despite the pandemic this year has seen a full schedule of meetings being held and the Panels have embraced remote meetings with all Members adapting well to the new ways of working.

Over the last year, we have discussed topics covering a range of aspects of community life and council services and we were given insight into some complex issues. The continuing impact of the pandemic played a large part role in the issues considered by the Panels during the year, with each Panel looking at the impact of COVID-19 in relation to their respective remits. Some of the highlights of the wider work of the Panels are outlined in this report, including inputting into the consultation on the proposed devolution deal with issues highlighted for inclusion in the draft Order; input into the development of the 'Our Council's Plan'; continued scrutiny of key environmental issues relating to the delivery of waste services during the pandemic including the Resources and Waste Strategy; and involvement in the development of the Council's Learning Strategy.

Looking forwards, I am keen to build on the positive impacts outlined in this annual report and have an increased involvement of scrutiny as policies, strategies and projects develop, prior to formal decisions being taken. It is also important that upcoming priority areas within Cabinet portfolios continue to be shared with scrutiny to encourage early involvement in any developing areas.

As I stated in last year's report, I am grateful to members of the various scrutiny panels for their hard work and contributions throughout the year. I would like to thank all the Scrutiny Councillors, Voluntary Co-optees and Governance Officers for their hard work and commitment during the year. I am also grateful to all the local groups, organisations and individuals who have attended virtual meetings, made presentations and provided evidence, and to council officers and Cabinet Members for their attendance and contributions.

Chair of Scrutiny

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Liz Smaje". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'L'.

**Councillor Liz Smaje**



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## Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee 2020/21

Committee Membership
Councillor Elizabeth Smaje (Chair)
Councillor Andrew Cooper
Councillor Harpreet Uppal
Councillor Andrew Marchington
Councillor Habiban Zaman

### Work Programme 2020/21

- Council Priorities and response to COVID-19.
- Our Council Plan.
- Crime and Disorder.
- Climate Commission Updates.
- Winter Preparedness.
- Heritage/Cultural/Tourism Strategies.
- Cohesion Strategy.
- Place Based Working.

## **Committee Highlights**

### **Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel in respect of the future arrangements for the Council's Housing Stock**

The Ad-hoc Scrutiny Panel was initially established by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee (OSMC) in November 2019 to carry out a focussed piece of work to identify the best option(s) for the Council to achieve the right balance of risk and outcomes for local residents in relation to the housing stock for which it was the landlord.

The Panel concluded its work and its final report, containing 13 recommendations and a related Action Plan which was presented to Cabinet on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2020. The report was taken into account by Cabinet in its consideration of the options for the future management of its housing stock on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2020 when an 'in principle' decision was made to change to an in-house delivery model. This decision was ratified at the meeting of Cabinet on 20<sup>th</sup> October 2020.

### **Devolution Deal for West Yorkshire**

The deal would devolve a range of powers and significant long-term funding to the region, with the aim of giving people more control and greater freedom to decide their future. It would provide the region with a greater level of influence with Government to shape policy and offer the potential for further deals in the future. The Combined Authority would gain access to funding streams equating to £1.8 billion of additional public funding, which would translate to a far greater impact on the economy and inclusive growth in West Yorkshire.

At an early stage, OSMC gave consideration to the consultation process being undertaken on the proposed deal and recommended that accessibility, including website access, should be reviewed and that consideration should be given to how best community networks might be involved.

The Committee also highlighted a number of issues that it considered should be taken into account in drafting the order including:

- How decisions made at Combined Authority level could be made visible to all elected members within the constituent authorities, to ensure transparency and accountability.
- The need for a strong emphasis on pre-decision scrutiny and involvement of Members at an early stage.
- That there should be opportunities for both elected members and members of the public to engage and be able to put direct questions to the Mayor/Combined Authority.
- Climate change should be a key focus.

### **Council Priorities and COVID-19 response**

The Committee received updates in June and December 2020 on the Council's response to the pandemic and held wide ranging discussions across a number of themes. The recommendations made included:

- Acknowledgement of the hard work undertaken by staff throughout the pandemic.
- Consideration to be given to, the opportunity provided by the implementation of mass community testing and vaccination to disseminate information, in relation to support services, to a wider audience.

### **Our Council Plan**

The Committee contributed to the development of the latest version of 'Our Council Plan' with the key areas below being highlighted:

- Digital inclusion across all age groups.
- 'Forever Kirklees' to be renamed.
- More prominence for resilience within the Council Plan.
- Inequalities to be front and centre.
- Employment opportunities for children and young people.
- Inclusive economy.
- Wider long-term projects in relation to cycling and climate change.
- Clear, consistent innovative messaging in the Communications Strategy.
- Budget strategy and partner involvement.

- Wider engagement, not just the usual networks.
- Clear actions to accompany the Council Plan.
- Partnerships – build on the approach taken over the last few months.

**The final document was approved at Council on 21<sup>st</sup> October 2020.**

## **Communities Partnership Plan**

The Committee considered the annual refresh of the Communities Partnership Plan which outlines the strategic priorities for the following 12 months in terms of addressing multi-agency issues affecting quality of life for residents. The overarching priorities were:

- Preventing and Reducing Crime.
- Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour.
- Protecting People from Serious Harm.
- Improving the Place.

Further to the Committee recommendations, officers reported that:

- The plan would be amended to reflect the local, regional, and national cooperative working that takes place through the Kirklees Partnership, particularly in relation to other West Yorkshire Districts.
- The comments made in relation to communication with the victims of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB), the ASB Strategy Group would give consideration to how this could be improved; noting that this should also include communication with Elected Members.
- The plan would be amended to reflect the range of strategies and action plans that sat beneath it.
- The Communities Board would continue to review its governance arrangements and how it could continue to improve its visibility and outcomes.

**Jill Greenfield, Service Director for Customers and Communities:** *“The feedback from scrutiny provided useful discussion and suggestions to build on our objectives to ensure the CPP is aligned and how the refresh could be built as a bridging platform for developing a broader integrated approach to the CPP that*

*would result in even better outcomes for Kirklees residents. In turn being able to support scrutiny to consider how it can further the CPP objectives across all services and functions it scrutinises etc, not just the community service. Scrutiny processes and dialogue have also supported us as a service to think about our communication and visibility.”*

## **Climate Commission**

In December 2020 the Committee received an update in relation to the establishment of a Climate Commission and the move to a ‘net zero’ target for the district by 2038. Members made a number of points and suggestions, as set out below, and recommended that they be used to inform the development of the Climate Change Commission:

- The need for the Commission to be progressed as soon as possible.
- The adoption of a wider global perspective of action on climate change.
- The benefits of working with the Local Government Association.
- Recognition of the need to consider carbon capture/offset.
- The need for the Commission to be aware of, and take account of, the timescales associated with Council budget setting.
- The need for consideration of how the recommendations made by the Commission will feed into Council decision making and how they will be monitored.
- The importance of developing mechanisms to provide effective feedback to the community/stakeholders on outcomes, to ensure transparency and wider buy-in and robust engagement, particularly with young people and the voluntary sector.
- The potential for the use of Passivhaus standards, particularly for Council owned sites/projects.
- The potential for the development of a district heating system.

Further progress reports were also requested.

## **Place-Based Working**

The final report of the Working Group on Place Based Working was presented for the Committee's consideration.

This Working Group had been established in September 2019 to review the development of the revised approach to place-based working in Kirklees and to examine how it would become embedded within the organisation and across its partners.

The clear conclusion of the Group was that place-based working was the right approach to take, doing more to engage citizens in their place, encouraging pride in their local area and ensuring their ideas were put into practice. The Group made a number of recommendations that were sent to the relevant Strategic Director and Cabinet Member for comment. The response would be submitted to the Committee in 2021/22.

## **Cultural, Heritage and Tourism Strategies**

In an example of pre-decision scrutiny, the Committee considered a report in respect of the development of three inter-related strategies, a Cultural Strategy, a Heritage Strategy, and a Tourism Strategy. This work was at a very early stage.

Representations and submissions were made by a number of interested local groups and the Committee made a number of comments and suggestions.

It was requested that the draft documents for each strategy be submitted to the Committee for further consideration, in due course and that the Head of Culture and Tourism respond to, and engage with, the groups that made submissions to the Committee. This was undertaken immediately following the meeting and an update was given to the Committee at its meeting in March.

## **Looking Forward 2021-22**

The Committee will establish an Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel to look at health and safety compliance for the residential housing stock and will continue to scrutinise the work being done to respond to the Climate Emergency.

In addition to its annual reviews in respect of crime and disorder and flooding, the Committee will undertake pre-decision scrutiny in relation to:

- The Inclusion and Diversity Strategy.
- The development of an Inclusive Communities Framework.
- The Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Investment Strategy.
- The Corporate Safeguarding Policy.

## Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel 2020/21

Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel membership
Councillor Habiban Zaman (Chair)
Councillor Aafaq Butt
Councillor Alison Munro
Councillor Vivien Lees-Hamilton
Councillor Lesley Warner
Councillor Bill Armer
David Rigby (Co-Optee)
Peter Bradshaw (Co-Optee) – until December 2020
Lynne Keady (Co-Optee)

### Work programme 2020/21

- Financial position of the Kirklees Health and Adult Social Care Economy.
- Community Care Services.
- Kirklees Integrated Wellness Service.
- Quality of Care in Kirklees.
- Suicide Prevention.
- Kirklees Safeguarding Adults Board (KSAB) 2019/20 Annual Report.
- Mid Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust (MYHT) Ambulatory Emergency Care (AEC) Services and Services provided at Dewsbury and District Hospital (DDH).
- Transforming Outpatient Care at Calderdale and Huddersfield NHS Foundation Trust (CHFT) and Mid Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust (MYHT).
- Yorkshire Ambulance Service (YAS) Response Times.
- Kirklees Immunisation Programme.
- Update on Winter Planning.
- Development of a local Community Care Package (pilot).
- Mental Health Services Workshop.

- COVID-19.
- Effectiveness of smoking cessation arrangements in Kirklees.
- Kirklees Care Homes Programme Board.

## **Panel highlights**

### **COVID-19**

As you would expect the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic was a clear area of focus for the panel. The panel received regular updates throughout the year that included input from the two hospital trusts serving Kirklees residents, Public Health, Clinical Commissioning Groups, Adult Social Care and Healthwatch Kirklees.

Kirklees Public Health played a major role in working with scrutiny to ensure that panel members were fully briefed on relevant data and the local challenges and response to the pandemic, including measures to mitigate the impact in Kirklees.

Due to the dynamic nature of the pandemic and the rapidly changing local and national circumstances the panel adopted a flexible approach to reviewing and monitoring the issue, with the aim of understanding the real time challenges and pressures facing the Council, health partners, key local stakeholders, and the public.

Specific areas that were covered during the year included, the emergence of new variants, the approach to testing, details of the support being provided to a wide range of local stakeholders, partners and public, plans covering the implementation of the COVID-19 vaccination programme, the work of the Infection, Prevention and Control team, the strategy for communicating and engaging with the public, contact tracing programme, and looking at the wider work of Public Health including the overarching immunisation programme.

### **Outcomes**

The detailed discussions provided the panel with valuable insight into the work that was being done locally to respond to the pandemic and to mitigate as far as possible the impact on the health and wellbeing of residents. The panel members highlighted a number of areas where they felt further work was required, including, the process

for sending patients back to a care home following hospital discharge and the approach to communicating with those communities who were hesitant about coming forward for the vaccination.

### **Kirklees Care Homes Programme Board**

The Kirklees Care Home Programme Board is responsible for the strategic development and short-term operational delivery of care home support based on the Programme Plan.

The Programme Plan covers a number of key areas of focus, including, the support to care homes during the pandemic, the system-wide approach to enhancing health in the care homes and the plans to support the sustainability of the sector.

At a meeting held in September 2020, the panel received an overview of the Care Homes Programme and the work that was taking place to describe what the future care home market may look like in terms of demand, so that providers could start to plan long term.

The panel questioned in detail aspects of the programme work that included, seeking assurances regarding the availability of PPE, care homes accessibility to COVID-19 tests and the approach to supporting and training care homes on Infection, Prevention and Control.

### **Outcomes**

As a result of the discussions, the panel agreed that it should continue to assess the progress of the work being carried out by the board to include looking at the key issues and challenges identified by the board and the actions taken to address them, and details of the training and support that will be provided to care homes on the verification of expected death, end of life care plans and testing and swab taking.

The panel also requested details of the outcomes of the work that was taking place to analyse the home care market and the implementation plan.

## **Winter Planning**

In November 2020, representatives from organisations across the Kirklees health and adult social care sector attended a meeting to present their preparations for the forthcoming winter period.

Areas that were covered included looking at the lessons learned from the previous winter period 2019 -2020 and to gain an insight into the experiences of service users. The panel was also keen to understand the measures that would be put in place to mitigate any additional pressures created by a resurgence of COVID-19.

The discussions were detailed and covered a wide variety of issues, including, a detailed focus on the capacity of the local health and adult social care system to deal with a second wave of the virus, the challenges facing NHS frontline staff and the steps being taken to provide additional bed capacity in the hospitals.

## **Outcomes**

The panel were supportive of the measures being taken to mitigate the increasing demand, particularly in the acute hospital settings. The panel were also keen to monitor closely the situation during the winter period and requested regular updates on winter pressures.

## **Looking forward 2021/22**

The work programme for 2021/22 will include a number of overarching themes that will include:

- A continued focus on the impact of COVID-19 on the local health and adult social care sector.
- Integration of services across the health and adult social care sector.
- Mental health and wellbeing.
- The work of Kirklees Public Health.
- The use of digital technology in the delivery of health and adult social care service.

## **Comments**

**Councillor Habiban Zaman, Lead Member** *“Despite a challenging year I was pleased that members of the panel were able to continue to work together in a collective and effective manner.*

*I am grateful to all our health partners and council colleagues who showed great commitment and support in helping to inform the work of the panel and provide an opportunity for scrutiny to consider a number of very relevant issues that included the impact of COVID-19 on our local health and adult social care services.*

*Finally, I would like to thank panel members for their contribution to the many deliberations that took place over the year and to the governance team for their support.”*

**Lynne Keady co-optee:** *“I have appreciated the opportunity to participate, as a Co-optee in the Kirklees Council Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel process - with this enabling me to be part of a collaborative community partnership approach which aims to ensure that local services are the best that they can be having regard to the resources that are available”.*

**Peter Bradshaw co-optee:** *“Work has progressed relatively uninterrupted during the pandemic. Members and other participants have adapted ably to virtual ways of working that have enabled the necessary business to be transacted efficiently and effectively”.*

**Richard Parry Strategic Director for Adults and Health:** *“As ever, Scrutiny Panel members have been helpful in their comments to officers and in providing insight that has helped shape the development of a number of areas of work. Their work has also, I would suggest, provided assurance to members of the public that there is independent oversight of NHS and social care services, which is particularly important given the centrality of these services to many people at a time when they may be feeling more vulnerable or dependent on the skill, support and compassion of staff in the services.”*

## Joint Health Scrutiny Committees 2020/21

<b>Calderdale and Kirklees Joint Health Scrutiny Committee (JHSC) Kirklees Membership</b>
Councillor Liz Smaje (Joint Chair)
Councillor Andrew Cooper
Councillor Alison Munro
Councillor Will Simpson

During the 2020 - 2021 municipal year, the JHSC met twice, once in September 2020 and once in March 2021.

The JHSC continued its work that focuses on reviewing the revised proposals to include, assessing its impact on patients and the public.

The meeting held in September 2020 covered a number of important areas that included an update on the work being undertaken to progress the planned reconfiguration of hospital services at Calderdale and Huddersfield NHS Foundation Trust. Areas covered in the discussions included, a programme update, that included the key milestones for completing business cases, the planning applications for the proposed works at Huddersfield Royal Infirmary (HRI) and Calderdale Royal Hospital (CRH), details of the design brief and plans for CRH and HRI and the plans for communicating and involving members of the public and NHS staff in the proposals.

In March 2021 the JHSC received a further update on the estate and service developments for CRH and HRI which included, details of how the design had been adapted to take account of the experiences of the pandemic, the Trust's plans for ongoing engagement with the public, and clarification on the timelines for the submission of the business cases.

The JHSC also considered an update on travel and transport arrangements to assess how the travel needs for the Trusts workforce, patients and visitors were being addressed in the plans for CRH and HRI.

The Committees' work continues.

## **West Yorkshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2020/21**

### **Kirklees membership**

Councillor Liz Smaje

The JHOSC met 5 times during 2020 - 2021 and covered a variety of issues that had implications for the West Yorkshire and Harrogate area.

Issues covered by the Joint Committee included an update on the pandemic and the impact on the work of organisations in the West Yorkshire and Harrogate Health and Care Partnership, an update on the Black Asian and Minority Ethnic Commission Review, the work being done to improve population health, an update on the West Yorkshire and Cancer Alliance and progress on the roll out of the COVID-19 vaccination programme.

In March 2021 the Joint Committee also held an informal workshop to discuss the impact of the White Paper, Integration and Innovation: Working Together to Improve Health and Social Care for All.

## **North Yorkshire and West Yorkshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Vascular Services) 2020/21**

### **Kirklees membership**

Councillor Liz Smaje

This Joint Health Scrutiny Committee was established to examine proposals from the National Health Service (NHS) North East & Yorkshire Region Specialised Commissioning Team, on changes to specialised vascular services in West Yorkshire.

In the previous municipal year, the Joint Health Scrutiny Committee had submitted comments and recommendations about the implementation of the proposal and had received confirmation from the Regional Commissioning Committee that it had approved the proposals and accepted the recommendations made by the Joint Committee.

In August 2020 the Joint Health Scrutiny Committee met with Representatives from NHS England and Improvement to discuss the outcomes of their consideration of the consultation feedback report and their response to the JHOSC's recommendations and comments. The Committee resolved that one further meeting should be arranged, to receive further information requested by the Committee and subject to the satisfactory submission of the information and assurances requested by the committee that the ongoing monitoring of the implementation of the changes could be undertaken by the West Yorkshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The final meeting of the Joint Health Scrutiny Committee was undertaken in November 2020. The discussions focused on the transition arrangements for specialised vascular services. Following the discussions members present agreed that the work of the Joint Committee was concluded and that the West Yorkshire and North Yorkshire Joint Health Scrutiny Committee (Vascular Services) no longer needed to meet.

## Corporate Scrutiny Panel 2020/21

Membership
Councillor Andrew Cooper (Chair)
Councillor John Taylor
Councillor Mahmood Akhtar
Councillor John Lawson
Councillor Will Simpson
Councillor James Homewood
Philip Chaloner (Voluntary Co-optee)

### Work Programme 2020/21:

- Financial Monitoring.
- Council's Risk Register.
- Capital Plan.
- Council Plan.
- Corporate Performance.
- Access to Services.
- Approach to Commercialisation.
- Procurement.
- Peoples Strategy.
- Technology Strategy.
- Leaving the EU preparations.
- Organisational Communication Strategy.

## Panel highlights

### Financial monitoring

Is an important and ongoing aspect of the panel's work and updates are provided to the panel on a regular basis. In August 2020, Councillor Graham Turner, Cabinet Member with responsibility for the corporate portfolio, provided the panel with an update on his portfolio priorities, advising that the main priority for the forthcoming year would be to address the council's finance in light of the impact of COVID-19 on the council's finances. Councillor Turner explained that the real challenge would be the next financial year and the budget and therefore a lot of work is being undertaken on this.

Further financial updates were provided throughout the year:

- 1st December 2020 – the panel received a high-level financial management update incorporating the current financial position for 2021, including COVID-19 impact and the councils MTFS for 21/22.
- 11th March 2021 – the panel received information on in-year financial performance as at Quarter 3, including COVID-19 impact and prospects for a balanced budget position by the current year end.

### Outcome

Given the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the council's finances the panel will continue to focus on financial monitoring in 2021/22.

### Comments

**Eamonn Croston (Service Director – Finance):** *“The impact of COVID-19 has been no less challenging for the management of Council finances in light of the impact of COVID-19. Corporate scrutiny panel has added value through its role both in the understanding of emerging financial management challenges locally, but also in terms of broader sectoral impacts, as well as a shared understanding and critical assessment of ongoing impacts and associated financial risks and Council and national Gov't approach to ensuring sectoral financial resilience and sustainability, both short and longer term”.*

In September 2020, the panel received information on the People Strategy and the Tackling Poverty Action Plan.

## **People Strategy**

The panel were reminded that at a previous panel meeting, they were invited to provide comments, suggestions, and key points that they wanted to see incorporated in the refreshed People Strategy. Suggestions made by the panel included, a flexible approach to staff benefits, improving the induction process and better tracking of internal promotions through the recruitment system and raising awareness of credit unions.

## **Outcome**

All the key points suggested by the Panel have been incorporated as part of the strategy's refresh.

## **Tackling Poverty Action Plan**

The information presented to the panel outlined the approach being taken to tackle poverty on a local level and the pre-COVID and post-COVID response. The panel were informed that poverty had a significant impact on all aspects of people's lives, for example, poor and unsafe housing, hidden homelessness and sofa surfing, and health can be severely impacted by poverty. In response to the information presented the Panel raised a number of points for further consideration:

- What strategy will be put in place to ensure that volunteers will continue to be in place for example at foodbanks, as many of the volunteers were furloughed workers who will be going back to work.
- How does housing feed into the work particularly in respect of low quality privately rented housing.
- With the furlough scheme coming to an end many people might not be going back to work because the work may not be available, does the planning and work being undertaken take account of this.

## **Outcome**

The panel will continue to monitor the strategy and approach taken to tackling poverty in Kirklees.

## **Technology Strategy**

In March 2021, the panel received an update on the Technology Strategy which is one of the key enabling strategies for the organisation when considering people, access, and assets as well as the IT.

The Panel heard that over the last twelve months, in response to the pandemic, there had been investment in home working equipment for staff which included getting approximately 3500 people and partners connected every day. The focus also shifted to look at the service desk offer as face-to-face contact could no longer be undertaken; therefore, it was important to look at operations and it proved successful, resulting in an improved customer focus and support in service desk operations. Working with the DfE over 5895 laptops were provided to maintained schools in Kirklees. Another important aspect of this work was getting 69 councillors online, enabling them to use Teams to attend council meetings virtually and over 90 virtual council meetings were held.

## **Outcome**

The panel thanked the officers for the work undertaken to enable council meetings and business to continue during the crisis.

## **Looking Forward to 2021/22**

The Panel will focus on the following areas during the 2021/22 municipal year: -

- Corporate Opportunities report.
- Council Risk Register.
- Capital Plan.
- Our Council Plan.
- Reopening of services to the public (Access to Services).
- The People Strategy.

- Technology Strategy.
- EU.
- Comms Strategy.
- Inclusion and Diversity.
- Value for money.

## **Comments**

**Councillor Andrew Cooper (Lead member):** *“I thank the Panel and Cabinet members who contributed to the Corporate Scrutiny Panel’s deliberations and of course the Council Officers who provided information and insight during challenging times.”*

**Philip Chaloner (Voluntary Co-optee):** *“It was a difficult year and a number of meetings cancelled. What was good was the ability to do virtual meetings and the achievement by the IT team was brilliant. With all the complications added to a tight financial framework it was a great effort to achieve a balance outcome.”*

## Economy and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Panel 2020/21

<b>Membership</b>
Councillor Harpreet Uppal (Chair)
Councillor Martyn Bolt
Councillor Richard Murgatroyd
Councillor John Taylor
Councillor Yusra Hussain
Councillor Richard Eastwood
Andrew Bird (Co-opted Member)
Chris Friend (Co-opted Member)
Eilidh Ogden (Co-opted Member)

### Work Programme 2020/21

- COVID-19 – Economic Impact/Community Response.
- Inward Investment Strategy.
- Tackling Poverty.
- Active Travel.
- Digital Strategy.
- Air Quality.
- Towns and Communities.
- Waste Service – recycling/fly tipping.

## **Panel Highlights**

### **Responding to COVID-19**

The Panel considered the impact of COVID-19 on all areas falling within the remit of the Economy and Neighbourhoods Panel throughout the 2020/21 municipal year alongside initial objectives as well as introducing new areas of focus as a direct result of the pandemic.

### **Community Response to COVID-19**

The Panel received an update on the Councils co-ordinated community emergency response (CER) which was established on 19 March 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The rapid response saw the mobilisation of partners and services from across the council, councillors, the wider system, voluntary and community groups and individual volunteers.

National government guidelines were being issued daily and as the country went into lockdown, the CER focused on ensuring that citizens of Kirklees were kept safe and protecting the most vulnerable with essential items such as food and medicines.

In considering the CER, the Panel focused on the following key areas:

- Capacity of Voluntary Organisations within the community.
- How such capacity and sustainability has been impacted by COVID-19.
- The ways in which the experiences of the last six months have begun to influence what happens next.

Colleagues from Third Sector Leaders and the anchor organisations (Paul Bridges, CEO of Huddersfield Mission, Andy Petrie, CEO of Local Services 2 You, and Val Johnson, representing Third Sector Leaders) were in attendance at the meeting to input directly into the discussion and to give their perspective in respect of the CER to COVID-19.

All commented on the positive approach to partnership working that had provided a platform to further build on relationships and developing cultures.

### **Outcomes**

The Panel noted the positive ongoing work undertaken by the Council and community organisation in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and expressed thanks to front line workers and all those involved in enabling the continuation of service delivery and keeping residents safe throughout the pandemic. However, the Panel observed that there were challenges faced by community organisations in relation to capacity, income generation and community buildings and suggested that future scrutiny be undertaken in respect of moving forward with the community anchor model to ensure the medium- and long-term stability of community organisations.

## **Economic Impact of COVID- 19**

### **Local Economic Recovery Plan**

The Panel were provided with a presentation setting out details in relation to the development of the Kirklees Economic Recovery Plan (ERP). The presentation initially highlighted the impact of COVID-19 in Kirklees which included statistics in respect of employment and the increase in benefit claims in the region.

Key discussions were held about the need for a green economy and active travel initiatives to be at the forefront of the recovery plan, the importance of a Transport Strategy for Kirklees, which includes reference to strategic linkages North/South as well as East/West.

### **Outcomes**

The Panel noted that detailed, evidenced modelling should be undertaken on particular locations, industries, and skills to ensure that support and investment is targeted effectively. The Panel recognised the importance of new green opportunities with regard to the built environment and supported the development of green skills training for the local workforce.

## **Additional Restrictions Grants and New Business Grants**

The Panel considered reports setting out details of the Additional Restrictions Grants and New Business Grants (processing and take up) which were established in response to national COVID-19 restrictions and the national lockdowns, to understand Measures to support the local economy and aid economic recovery.

### **Outcomes**

During discussion of the grants the Panel noted that the complexity of the work in respect of the different types of grants available and agreed that a focus was required for the self-employed creative industry. The importance of engagement and communication with applicants throughout the claim process was highlighted as an area for improvement.

## **Impact on poverty and tackling inequalities**

At the same meeting the Panel also considered the Community Grant Scheme after Public Health England released a review of disparities in risks and outcomes in June 2020 and the Government announced a community champion scheme for those communities and groups who had shown to be most at risk from COVID-19.

### **Outcomes**

Kirklees was one of the areas identified to apply for the funding due its range of diverse communities. During the discussion the Panel noted the work of the council with disabled people, people with learning disabilities as well as BAME Communities on the vaccine roll out.

## **Housing Issues**

### **Housing Rent and Support to Council Tenants and Support to Homeless Households and Rough Sleepers During the COVID-19 Pandemic**

A report was submitted providing Panel members with information on the provision of services and support to Council tenants in relation to the payment of housing rent and to homeless households and rough sleepers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### **Outcomes**

The Panel noted the strong working model in respect of homelessness and rough sleepers and acknowledged the positive effect of a holistic approach. It was also recommended that effective, comprehensive communications methods be used to make sure Council tenants were aware of the support measures offered by the Council, with private tenants and owner occupiers facing difficulties being directed to partner organisations.

### **Private Rented Housing Sector (Support as a result of COVID-19)**

The Panel received an update which set out the ways in which Councils Housing Solutions Service supported the private rented sector during the COVID-19 pandemic. Key issues included, how inspections continued in COVID-19 safe ways and considering how the sector may be impacted when the Government ban on evictions ended. The panel also asked the council to consider a private landlord registration scheme to improve quality in the sector.

## **Environmental Issues**

### **General Waste/air quality updates**

The Panel continued to scrutinise key environmental issues relating to the delivery of waste services during the pandemic and an update in respect of the Resources and Waste Strategy Update.

The Panel considered a report on the Greenspace Action Team and the new approach on clearing Fly tipping. The Panel were informed that the team had been restructured to deal with fly tipping across the borough. It was noted that fly tipping was still an issue of concern for some residents in Kirklees and in June and July the percentage of fly tipping was twice as high as in previous years due to lockdown and a rise in people making home improvements. It was noted that further improvements were needed in rural areas and plans for hot spot areas.

Following the introduction of the 5-year Air Quality Action Plan, the Panel continued to monitor and consider the following:

- Which measures had proven effective, and which provided good value for money.
- Addressing the issue of vehicles with idling engines particularly outside schools.
- How the planning system can be used to address issues in relation to infrastructure to encourage sustainable transport/active travel.
- Improving infrastructure to encourage travel by public transport/cycling and walking.
- Encouraging/ facilitating better options for travel to school to reduce use of private cars.
- Making air quality reporting transparent for resident in Kirklees.

### **Active Travel**

The Panel continued to monitor current and planned Active Travel infrastructure. At one of its meetings the Panel received a report setting out details of the current influences on Kirklees Council's vision for an Active Travel Strategy along with some of the next steps to developing the Strategy.

John Lewis, Chair of the Kirklees Cycling Campaign, was invited to the meeting to respond to the report and input into the item from the Group's perspective.

## **Outcomes**

At the close of the meeting, it was agreed that the following comments and views of the Panel be considered as part of the development of an Active Travel Strategy:

- There was room for improvement in respect of linkages. It should be a priority to develop linkages outside the major highway construction projects.
- Wider engagement was needed with both the cycling community and noncycling community.
- Secure cycle parking and changing facilities were needed to encourage behavioural change.
- There needed to be a balance between connectivity for cars/cyclists and walkers.
- Off road solutions were preferable for non-cyclists as a means of accessing town centres and avoiding busy main roads.

## **Major Transport Schemes – Update**

The Panel considered an update on a number of the major transport schemes being developed in Kirklees.

There were several (written) representations made under the item from local groups such as Kirklees Cycling Campaign, Huddersfield Civic Society, and the Friends of Earth as well members of the public many raising issues in relation to climate change, tree felling, air quality, active travel and the impact on residents and business.

Key discussions were held around, the aforementioned topics as well as improving and investing in transport infrastructure across Kirklees and in rural parts of the district, improving transport links from Kirklees to North and South Yorkshire, improving engagement with Councillors and the accessibility of information.

## **Outcomes**

It was noted that many of the projects were very complex and large and that they should be considered as standalone updates going forwards, it was important for scrutiny to be involved early on in the process and for engagement with councillors to

be prioritised. It was also noted that that these large projects should also be considered in relation to the Council's climate change commitments.

## **Looking Forward 2021/2022**

The Panel will have a strong focus on pre-decision scrutiny.

One of our key priorities will be scrutinising a number of major regeneration and infrastructure projects announced by the Council including:

- The Huddersfield Blueprint, Plans for Dewsbury Town Centre, the Cultural Heart and the Huddersfield Market.
- The A62 to Cooper Bridge Improvement Corridor Scheme.

The Panel will also consider:

- The Trans Pennine Route Upgrade.
- The Resources and Waste Strategy.
- The transfer of KNH to an in-house council service.
- The Hot food takeaway SPD and the Affordable Housing and Housing Mix SPD.
- Review of Winter maintenance services including the link to planning.
- Smaller Towns Programme.
- The refresh of the Economic Strategy.
- Place Partnerships and Active Travel.
- Play Areas.
- Kirklees Housing Allocations Policy Review.

## **Comments**

**Councillor Harpreet Uppal, Lead Member** – *“As the Chair of the Economy and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Panel, I would like to thank all Panel Members and Co-optees for their commitment to scrutiny throughout the 2020-21 municipal year. The pandemic has brought many challenges such as working virtually and new areas of focus for the Panel who have worked hard to ensure good scrutiny of a busy work programme and have helped to drive improvements”.*

## Children's Scrutiny Panel 2020/21

<b>Membership</b>
Councillor Andrew Marchington (Chair)
Councillor Paul White
Councillor Richard Smith
Councillor Amanda Pinnock
Councillor Paul Davies
Councillor Yusra Hussain
Dale O'Neill
Linda Summers
Toni Bromley

## Work Programme For 2020/21

- Review of the Improvement Journey.
- Educational Outcomes.
- Number of Children in Care.
- Youth Services and Initiatives.
- Partnership arrangements.
- Special Educational Needs and High Needs.
- Performance Information.
- Elective Home Education.

## **Panel highlights**

### **Special Educational Needs and Disabilities update (August 2020)**

In August 2020, the panel considered the challenges faced with regards to increased demand for Education, Health and Care Plans and the subsequent rise in costs. This led to significant pressure on the 'High Needs Block', which could only be tackled collectively across the whole SEND system. To ensure that needs, provision and spend were tightly interlinked the Council needed to ensure the SEND system was joined up and easier to navigate for everyone.

As a result of the pandemic, changes to Section 24 of the Children and Families Act had been made by Government which resulted in the Local Authority and commissioning health bodies still being required to carry out Education Health and Care Assessments, undertake Annual Reviews and finalise plan. The Statutory timescales were allowed to be extended to take into account a longer process due to COVID-19, however this had to be actioned as soon as reasonably practical.

COVID-19 Risk Assessments were required for all children with an EHCP, and the report provided an analysis of the risk assessments returned to the Local Authority.

Progress had been achieved across all areas with the SEND 10-point improvement plan which had been developed in October 2019.

### **Outcome**

As a result of the discussion of the SEND update the Panel requested that an update report was considered by scrutiny which included an analysis of figures relating to assessments.

### **Exploitation Strategy (August 2020)**

The Kirklees Exploitation Safeguarding Strategy 2019 -2021 had been launched earlier in 2020. The strategy provided the strategic framework to develop and strengthen the response in the identification, assessment and intervention with children, and young people, through the implementation of a contextual safeguarding approach. The approach provided an understanding of, and response to, young

people's experiences of significant harm beyond their families. It extended the focus of support and intervention from the individual child and their family to their wider social context; working with young people, families, organisations, services, communities, and others to increase the ability of parents, carers, communities and services to prevent and protect.

The development of the Children's Services Risk and Vulnerabilities team, which operated with partnership involvement in the front door of Children's Social Care had enabled a more co-ordinated approach and delivery of services to children vulnerable to, at risk of exploitation and their families. All child exploitation and children missing from home or care cases were discussed daily in the multi-agency meetings and further explored and actioned at weekly Exploitation Screening Panels. Alongside these, MACE meetings (multi agency Child Exploitation Meetings) work was ongoing to further develop partnership information sharing pathways. The multi-agency approach to safeguarding children vulnerable to, at risk of exploitation would be further strengthened through the implementation of the Youth Engagement Service (YES).

The Panel supported the development of an overarching strategy in respect of exploitation, acknowledging that the issue did not sit in isolation and overlapped into distinct areas such as Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and criminal exploitation, which required a multi-agency partnership approach.

## **Outcome**

Scrutiny agreed the work of the Practice Learning Review was a means of informing the work of scrutiny in this area.

## **Learning Strategy (November 2020)**

In November 2020, the Panel looked at the development of the Kirklees Council Learning Strategy and the proposed approach and timeline. The council and its partners were ambitious that many more children and young people across Kirklees achieved more success. Analysis indicated that the children and young people most likely not to achieve at the highest levels were those that suffered some form of disadvantage. A successful and thriving education and skills system across Kirklees

drove both social and economic development through a reduction in public sector spend on remedial health care and crime, whilst promoting inward investment. Above all it improved the life chances of children, young people and communities making Kirklees a better place to live, work and visit for everyone.

The Education and Learning Partnership Board was uniquely positioned in that it had a holistic ambition for every child, every young person, and every community in Kirklees. With that in mind it was unique in that it was the one strategic leadership organisation that had a statutory responsibility to all its people.

The learning strategy report outlined proposals for a co-produced strategy to address the following key points:

- Building upon the existing strengths and expertise in Kirklees.
- Addressing the issues that face the children, young people, and communities of Kirklees.
- Bring together the entire community of Kirklees.
- Enable the LA to clarify and fulfil its role and meet both its moral and statutory duties.
- Learn from best practice both within the district and elsewhere.
- Develop policy and strategy that is informed by the voice of children, young people, and communities.
- Science: the evidence from both research and data.

## **Outcome**

Scrutiny continues to be involved in the further development of the Learning Strategy and is an area of focus for the 2021 -2022 municipal year.

## **Emotional Wellbeing of Students (January 2021)**

In January 2021, the Panel were updated on the Emotional Wellbeing of Students which highlighted the following key issues:

- Support to be put in place for young people as they returned to school post third lockdown as schools agreed it was critical to the emotional wellbeing of students.

- In May 2020, the Education and Psychology Team worked hard to develop an offer of targeted support to help youngsters during the pandemic.
- Staff in schools had been provided with guidance and support so they were able to help children, complemented by the Education Health and Care Plan offer.
- A training package on emotional coaching was sent to all schools prior to September 2020, with lesson plans which included direct resources that children could participate in.
- The Government had introduced a grant of £63,609 to support the wellbeing for educational return in September 2020.
- A programme of resilience was to be in place for children from March 2021.
- Help was in place for college staff to support the health and emotional wellbeing of their students.
- Opportunities were offered for additional SENCO support.
- More schools were to participate in the Alex Timpson Trauma in Schools Programme, which had been underpinned by Oxford University and provided the best strategies to address the needs of vulnerable children who had been through trauma. Positive feedback had been received from schools involved in the first wave of the roll out of this programme.
- The Mental Health Trailblazing programme was a national initiative and the Council had been successful in 2 bidding rounds and as a result 80 Kirklees schools had access to the additional support. The Council wanted to sustain and widen funding opportunities already in place so these could be made available for all schools in Kirklees.
- A children and young people survey had been carried out by the Learning Service in May 2020 and December 2020 along with public health colleagues and the results were currently being analysed.
- Schools had been very pro-active in working with early support colleagues to make resources available to support the health and wellbeing of youngsters.

The panel raised concerns around the mental health of students and in particular:

- The high number of children that attended school as their parents were classed as critical workers and whether everyone was following the rules relating to critical workers.

- The number of children of critical workers who had to remain at home as their schools were closed and that greater consideration was needed to be given to ensure these families received the support they required.

A high level of work had been undertaken by the Learning Service to provide schools with the funding, tools and training they needed to support children's health and emotional wellbeing during the pandemic. Staff had been under huge pressures and were concerned that this could take its toll. There was a Head Teacher Wellbeing service in place in Kirklees which offered free coaching and support to school leaders.

### **Engagement of Families Together (February 2021)**

During 2021, the Panel considered developments taking place through the Early Help offer for children Young People and Families. Engagement with stakeholders took place for a period of 8 weeks from 4<sup>t</sup> January to the 26<sup>th</sup> of February which included a generic online survey, online meetings with key partners, online public sessions, sessions with Councillors, engagement with schools and parents/carers and leaflets sent to food and baby banks and included the following:

- 158 online surveys were completed, and 8 online public sessions had taken place.
- 31 sessions had taken place with key partners, staff teams, third sector organisations, volunteers and foster carers had taken place.
- 250 stakeholders had engaged through online meetings.
- Online sessions had taken place with young people with an adapted survey, 72 young people completed the survey.
- 18 sessions had been held with Councillors from all 23 wards.
- The team attended Town/Parish council meetings.
- Leaflets were printed and shared with all main Kirklees food banks and Rainbow baby bank and information had been shared and promoted through social media channels.

## **Outcomes**

The Panel agreed to keep Family Hubs as an area of focus on their 2021 - 2022 work programme and would undertake the following:

- Attend one of the information sessions for Councillors in September 2021 to give a progress update on implementation of the family hubs.
- Consider a further update at a future meeting which would provide a narrative to explain how and when a family of 4 (2 working parents and 2 school age children) on a minimum wage would be able to access help from the hubs when they needed it.
- That the issue of prevention work around mental health and trauma experienced by children be built into the overall early help offer.
- That information be provided for families on how and when they could access all the services on offer and that examples be given of how the services would relate to families.
- That the Panel should receive a future update on how the voice of the child would be taken into account in the work of the engagement of family hubs.

## **Looking forward to 2021-2022**

The panel agreed that as well as considering reports on important issues relating to children, they would undertake scrutiny by way of visits to a number of places, for example, the Youth Engagement Service, the front door to meet with officers to see the Tableau software system working in practice and a meeting with Social Workers on the frontline to undertake a 'temperature check' of how they were getting on and seek feedback on whether they felt that there was a professional pathway for them within the Council. This will enable members to talk to staff and see for themselves how the service is delivered.

There are a number of areas where the panel will continue to scrutinise progress, including, the Improvement Journey and the Front Door Health Check, Educational Outcomes and the Kirklees Learning Strategy with a view to the Panel attending the launch event. The Panel also agreed to scrutinise multi-systemic therapies and the cost effectiveness, Wellbeing and Mental Health of children and adolescents and a

progress report on the SEND Peer Review. The Panel will also seek feedback from parents involved in the Adhoc Panels on SEND and Elective Home Education on how well the recommendations within the reports had progressed and been implemented.

**Cllr Andrew Marchington, Chair:** *“Once again, I would like to thank all those who have contributed to the work of the panel and have the best interests of the Children and Young People of Kirklees in mind when they are making decisions”*

*“We have done our best with the work programme during the challenges of the last twelve months but are looking forward to getting back to face-to-face meetings whilst making the most of the important opportunities to improve access to our meetings using online technologies. Renewing visits to those working with children and young people, and more engagement with young people, families and carers will be key parts of our work during the year ahead”.*

# Team contact details

**Contact the Governance Team at:**

The Democracy Service  
Civic Centre 3  
High Street  
Huddersfield HD1 2TG

**Email:** [scrutiny.governance@kirklees.gov.uk](mailto:scrutiny.governance@kirklees.gov.uk)

**Phone:** 01484 221000

**Facebook:** <http://facebook.com/kirklees.scrutiny>

**Twitter:** <http://twitter.com/kirkleescrutiny>