

## Kirklees Council

### Scrutiny Lead Member Report

**Lead Member:** Cllr Yusra Hussain

**Panel:** Economy and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Panel

Period of Update: From August 2022 to December 2022

#### Panel Highlights

##### **Lead Member briefings:**

25<sup>th</sup> August 2022 - Service Director Skills and Regeneration regarding the Bus Stations Update.

29<sup>th</sup> September 2022 – Head of Major Projects/ Service Director Skills and Regeneration regarding the Bus Stations Update.

4<sup>th</sup> October 2022 – Service Director/ Senior Officers - Environmental Strategy & Climate Change regarding the Climate Change Action Plan

4<sup>th</sup> October 2022 – Service Director Highways and Streetscene/ Head of Highways regarding Road Safety (Speeding Enforcement)

2<sup>nd</sup> November 2022 – Acting Head of Housing regarding the Housing Allocations Update

2<sup>nd</sup> November 2022 – Service Director for Culture and Visitor Economy / Head of Culture and Tourism regarding the Culture, Heritage, and Tourism Strategies.

#### Overview of Panel Activity and meetings

##### **Meeting of the Panel held 30<sup>th</sup> August 2022:**

- Hot Food Takeaway Supplementary Planning Guidance, pre-decision scrutiny, including the outcomes of the public consultation.
- Affordable Housing and Housing Mix Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPD) early insight into the contents of the draft SPD and the planned next steps.
- Winter Maintenance Policy Review, presentation setting out current policy and work undertaken to carry out a review of this.
- Huddersfield District Energy Network, the outcomes of the Huddersfield District network Outline Business Case Study, the draft Cabinet report and proposed next steps ahead of Cabinet considering the issues on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2022.

##### **Meeting of the Panel held 18<sup>th</sup> October 2022:**

- Kirklees Climate Change Action Plan, the draft Kirklees Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP), the draft Cabinet report and the proposed next steps.
- Update on Huddersfield, Heckmondwike and Dewsbury Bus Station Projects,

a progress update and the next steps for the Bus Station Projects.

### **Meeting of the Panel held 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2022:**

- Kirklees Housing Policy Review 2022, an update on the status and outcome of the commissioned review.
- Highways Safety Presentation, in relation to Road Safety and Speeding Enforcement
- Cultural, Heritage and Tourism Strategies, an update on the creation of three new inter-related strategies.

### **Key Highlights and Outcomes**

#### **Hot Food Takeaway Supplementary Planning Guidance (HFT SPD)**

The Panel considered the draft HFT SPD which was first considered by the Panel October 2021. At its meeting held 30<sup>th</sup> August 2022 the Panel received the outcomes of the public consultation and proposed modifications to the SPD for comment before its adoption in September 2022.

The Panel was advised that the public consultation on the draft document took place for a period of six weeks (Tuesday 9 November to Tuesday 21 December 2021) and received a high-level overview of Kirklees Health facts.

In the discussion to follow the Panel raised concerns around enforcement of the SPD and explored a number of themes including; the definition between what constitutes as a restaurant or a takeaway, the link to encouraging recycling and what the scale of the problem was in relation to the hot food takeaways in Kirklees.

**Outcomes:** The Panel welcomed the update and recommended that Officers consider the issue of enforcement, including recycling. The Panel also requested for the definition of a restaurant in comparison to a takeaway be provided to the Panel.

#### **Winter Maintenance Policy Review**

Winter maintenance was last reviewed by the Panel in September 2021 which included a focus on the link to planning. Key issues noted included the maintenance of active travel routes, the challenges around housing growth, resources, and capacity for winter maintenance and the Panel recommended that the current policy for winter maintenance should be assessed.

At the meeting of the Panel held on 30<sup>th</sup> August 2022, the Panel received a presentation which provided an overview of the winter maintenance policy and the work undertaken by the 'Highways Working Group' which was established to undertake the required review of the policy and the supporting winter maintenance operational procedures reflecting the considerations raised at the previous scrutiny meeting.

The Panel were informed that:

- The budget for winter maintenance had been increased from £1.2m to £1.8m in 2021/22.

- The comparison gritting lengths, treatments times and grit bin provision for the West Yorkshire area.
- Kirklees had the shortest treatment time (on par with Leeds Council) and gritted a higher percentage of the carriageway network.
- Kirklees had the highest number of grit bins on its untreated carriageway network.
- Recent service improvements including (i) automated grit bin process, (ii) extending winter standby by three weeks, (iii) effective social media communications and (iv) the review of the existing volunteer scheme.

In the discussion to follow the Panel explored various issues including; the approach to active travel routes and the maintenance of the Dalton and Colne Valley greenways, snow warden safety when working on icy pavements next to roads and the use of orange for visibility vests, the amount of grit laid on roads and the use of snow ploughs on gritting lorries, the approach to new housing estates and grit bin provisions and the impact inflation would have on the winter maintenance budget.

Concerns were raised in relation to the gritting around health centres and the consistency of the approach across wards. Officers agreed to consider this further going forwards.

The Panel also commended officers on the use of social media, noting the positive responses from members of the public now that there were clearer and more direct lines of communication with them.

**Outcomes-** The Panel noted the Winter Maintenance Policy Review and requested that further information be provided to the Panel in relation to the, (i) Gritting routes to health centres (ii) the future maintenance of active travel routes when the Council had invested initial capital, (iii) the increase in costs for gritting, (iv) information relating to whether grit bin provision could be a planning condition and (v) details of the risk assessment for Snow Wardens. Various responses have been sent to the Panel via email since.

#### Progress Update on Huddersfield, Heckmondwike and Dewsbury Bus Station Projects (Part of the Transforming Cities Fund)

The Panel considered a report setting out a progress update and the next steps for the Huddersfield, Heckmondwike and Dewsbury Bus Station Projects (part of the Transforming Cities Fund Programme). Lead Officers from the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) were also in attendance.

Across the three bus stations, the projects were being developed in response to key issues which included poor-quality physical environment, anti-social behaviour, road safety concerns, a lack of good quality services and accessible facilities, and poor pedestrian access. The investment in the bus stations aimed to achieve increased customer satisfaction, and an overall increase in bus patronage. This was along with reductions in anti-social behaviour and improvements would also make the bus station more energy efficient and contribute to the wider regeneration of the town centres.

In the discussion to follow the Panel explored how the planned improvements would achieve the desired outcomes and how wider bus services could be improved (particularly in more rural areas). Other key themes included questions around consultation/engagement, increasing bus patronage, safety, accessibility, the greening of the bus stations and the maintenance of these areas.

**Outcomes:** A key recommendation arising from the Panel was that Officers should seek to consult with non-bus users in relation to increasing bus patronage, a key priority of the schemes. The wider connectivity of smaller towns and more rural areas should be considered to increase network usage.

The Panel also felt that there should be designated officers with accountability for the maintenance of green spaces around bus stations. These officers should be based locally or visit regularly and should be a point of contact in relation to maintenance. The Panel highlighted that accessibility and feeling safe should be a key consideration across all the schemes, and to achieve this there should be visible security stations/patrols inside the bus stations in relation to increasing safety. The Panel also questioned the removal of trees to facilitate the bus stations improvements and highlighted that the Council's policy in relation to removing trees be followed. It was also agreed that regular review be undertaken in relation to the value engineering and the scope of the projects.

#### Kirklees Climate Change Action Plan

At its meeting held on the 18<sup>th</sup> October 2022, the Panel considered the draft Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP) the draft Cabinet report and the proposed next steps.

The Panel were informed that in response to Kirklees Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency in 2019, that the CCAP was developed to reach the Council's target to be net zero by 2038. The Plan set out several actions to achieve this and was centred on evidence and public engagement. The plan was structured by 8 action areas, Buildings, Energy, Natural Environment and Biodiversity, Sustainable Food and Agriculture, Transport, Waste, Water and Cross-Cutting. The action plan would go to Cabinet for approval on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2022 followed by full Council on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2022.

In the discussion to follow the Panel considered a variety of themes in detail including, the approach to communications, the link between the CCAP and other key strategic documents (e.g.- future revisions of the Local Plan, the Transport Strategy and the Resources and Waste Strategy) , the measurement of reduction of carbon emissions and the associated timeframes of the actions.

In relation to Natural Environment and Biodiversity the Panel also asked several questions in relation to; the consideration of the species of trees planted in the proposed sapling nurseries, the risks of invasive species, encouragement for hedgerow productions to increase biodiversity, (particularly insect population growth), water efficiency standards and the wetting of the moors to reduce flood risk and increase carbon capture in the peatlands.

**Outcomes:** The Panel made a number of recommendations including that:

1. The place-based focus of the CCAP should be emphasised, particularly in relation to communications, to address individual needs within different communities.
2. There should be several different methods/streams of communication to engage with a variety of audiences, with different levels of understanding and needs.
3. Lay language and success stories (linking key technical information to the real-life experiences of the public) be used to increase understanding in the community.
4. The Climate Change Action Plan should be used to help inform and support the Local Plan and other key strategic links, such as the Transport Strategy and Waste Strategy.
5. Mid-Term targets (i.e.- for reducing emissions) should be included in Phase 2 delivery of the Plan.
6. The recruitment of external Climate Champions be considered in the long term (the panel had since made a request for a specific timeframe o be included).
7. When reviewing building efficiency, co-benefits (such as the social value of place-based working) be considered when making judgements.
8. Consideration be given to native species when planting and that the details for mitigating the risks of invasive species be included in the Plan.
9. Consideration be given to the type of trees planted in particular areas to ensure the desired outcome.
10. Site inspectors be included as part of the mandate that focuses on protecting and enhancing the natural environment.
11. Consideration be given to the re-wetting of the moors to encourage carbon retention in the peatlands and to mitigate the impact of degradation.
12. It was important to encourage farmers to use any available hedgerow to increase biodiversity particularly insect population growth.
13. Consideration be given to Low Emissions Zones and be incorporated into the CCAP, as well as the Air Quality Action Plan and Environment Strategy.
14. The plan be reviewed and monitored to ensure the Climate Emergency and actions were being achieved.
15. The new development higher water efficiency standards be considered for expansion to private developments.
16. In relation to net zero targets and reducing carbon emissions there needed to be a clear baseline within the plan to measure progress.

### **Monitoring Work**

None this period

### **Looking Ahead**

At upcoming meetings of the Panel, the following items are to be considered:

- Grounds Maintenance Update
- Skills, Training and Apprenticeships (how this influences economic

development with a particular focus on Post 16 Skills).

- Tree Policy Framework
- Future of Bus Patronage (and withdrawals)
- Air Quality Action Plan (Monitoring Data)
- Environmental Sustainability Strategy
- EV Charging/Infrastructure Phase 1 Delivery / Phase 2 Development
- Future of Housing Homes and Neighbourhoods
- Statutory Food Hygiene/ Health and Safety Plans 2023 – 2024