

Economy and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Panel
Tuesday 22ND November 2022 at 1.00pm

Present:

Councillor Tyler Hawkins
Councillor Matthew McLoughlin
Councillor John Taylor
Councillor Martyn Bolt

Co-optees:

Chris Friend (Co-optee)
Jane Emery (Co-optee)

Attendees:

Councillor Will Simpson, Cabinet Member for Culture and Greener Kirklees
Paul Howard, Acting Head of Housing, Policy and Strategy
Michelle Anderson-Dore, Head of Partnerships, Growth and Regeneration, Homes and Neighbourhoods
Naz Parkar, Service Director, Homes and Neighbourhoods
Mark Scarr, Head of Highways
Graham West, Service Director, Highways and Streetscene
Adele Poppleton, Service Director, Environment and Climate Change – Culture and Visitor Economy
Kath Wynne-Hague, Head of Culture and Tourism, Environment and Climate Change – Culture and Visitor Economy

Apologies:

Councillor Yusra Hussain (Chair)
Jonathan Milner (Co-optee)

1. Membership of the Committee

Apologies were received from Councillor Yusra Hussain and Jonathan Milner Co-optee.

The Members of the committee nominated Tyler Hawkins as Chair in Councillor Hussain's absence.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18th October 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

Chris Friend, Co-optee highlighted page 7, item 6 and asked for some clarity in relation to the recruitment of external climate champions in the 'longer term'.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes be approved as a correct record.

3. Interests

No Interests were declared.

4. Admission of the Public

All items were considered in the public session.

5. Deputations/Petitions

No deputation or petitions were received.

6. Public Question Time

No questions were received from the public.

7. Kirklees Housing Allocations Policy Review 2022:

Paul Howard, Acting Head of Housing, Policy and Strategy, provided a verbal summary in relation to the updates to the Housing Allocations Policy, and advised the Panel that:

- It was a Legal requirement of the Council to have a Policy in place relating to Housing Allocations.
- The current Policy had not been reviewed since 2011 and there was a need to ensure it was compliant.
- The Housing Quality Network were appointed to consider the Policy and identified that the existing policy was broadly compliant, and following consultation, it was agreed that minor amendments be made.
- The amendments included new guidance in relation to domestic abuse and a new Band (B9) relating to home loss which supported existing tenants to secure alternative accommodation.
- The main consideration of the Housing Quality Network was the number of people on the housing register which varied between 19,000 and 20,000 and the number of properties available to people within bands A to E.
- There were around 30 properties that became available each week which highlighted that there were a number of people on the register who would not secure a property within the near future.
- People on lower bands were signposted to other areas of housing.
- It was decided that all housing bands would remain and also the register of people with varying housing needs.
- There was a lack of age designation, but the tools within the existing Policy (Local Lettings Plan) would ensure greater flexibility and address the issues.
- A further consideration of the Housing Quality Network was for the Local Authority to make better use of Management lets, to address it's responsibilities in relation to better meeting the needs of children leaving the care system.

The Panel noted the update and asked a question in relation to military families and veterans highlighting that they should not be disadvantaged by the allocation of housing.

Paul Howard, Acting Head of Housing responded to advise that information relating to Military families and Veterans was covered within the existing Policy and remained compliant, so no changes were required.

In the discussion to follow the Panel highlighted the following concerns:

- That if a tenant died, there was no policy in place that allowed other family members to remain in the property.
- That consultation had taken place with Cabinet Members / relevant Portfolio Holders but not with Ward Councillors.
- That age designation caused problems, especially in areas that were originally designed for the elderly and vulnerable, and that careful consideration needed to be given in terms of location and property type.

Paul Howard clarified the point regarding consultation and confirmed that Officers had made the decision in conjunction with Cabinet Portfolio Holders. In response to a question in relation to a discrepancy in the figures on page 18 regarding lettings, he further advised that this was because of the time the figures were recorded as this data varied day to day.

Michelle Anderson-Dore, Head of Partnerships, Growth and Regeneration, advised in relation to age designation that there were areas across Kirklees where it applied, and that the challenge was identifying suitable applicants based on their age whilst not leaving properties unoccupied.

The Panel highlighted that the consultation figure on page 20 was less than 2 residents per Ward and that there was a need to talk to people beyond those who were already part of the system. The Panel questioned the confidence in the consultation responses and suggested it would be useful to fully understand consultation requirements to ensure correct decisions were being made.

Paul Howard responded and advised that the amendments were shared with stakeholder consultation groups, and that consultation was done with individual stakeholders during the COVID-19 Pandemic which affected the availability of some people.

Naz Parkar Service Director, Homes and Neighbourhoods added that the requirements to consult the public were not as crucial given the changes were minor and that wider public consultation, including with those not on the register, would occur for each policy change.

Councillor Elizabeth Smaje highlighted the Local Lettings Plan, and that the perspective of tenants was important. Councillor Smaje suggested conversations were undertaken with the people living in sensitive letting accommodation in relation to the use of the Local Lettings Plan, how it was applied and the process that was followed if someone did not abide by it.

Naz Parkar, noted the importance of the tenants' perspectives and advised that there had been a large body of feedback regarding sensitive and local letting plans, which would help strengthen the plans. It was further advised in relation to tenants not abiding by the Policy, that if a tenant had secured tenancy rights, consideration would be given to the tenancy agreement and the Councils contractual obligations and legal processes would be followed to resolve the issues.

Paul Howard responded to a question regarding a robust review of the Local Lettings Plan and shared that more work needed to be undertaken in relation to identifying

particular areas of sensitive lets, to be able to talk to the people within those areas and build background information that would inform the plan.

Naz Parkar responded to a question from the Panel regarding the number of people in emergency accommodation and if they would be placed in banded properties. Naz advised that there were around 300 people in emergency accommodation, 89 of which were in bed and breakfast. It was noted that the Council had a duty to house these people permanently which included placing some people in mixed communities.

In response to a question in relation to the current housing stock, Naz Parker shared that there were 21,500 homes across the district but there was a particular shortage of 4-bedroom homes and 3-bedroom homes did not become available very often. Naz further advised that there were a further 1,000 homes managed on behalf of others and a further 6,000+ for which the Council had accommodation rights.

The Panel acknowledged the situation was far worse than anticipated and that there were not many more houses than the 19,000 people on the housing register and questioned if the public were aware of the housing stock in order to ensure they had realistic expectations.

In response, Naz Parkar further advised that only 1700 to 1800 homes became available each year and that the turnover rate was average across the district.

The Panel highlighted the recent tragedy relating to mould in social housing and suggested that information was included in the policy to address the issue of mould and how the Council would ensure that this was dealt with.

RESOLVED: The Panel noted the Kirklees Housing Allocations Policy Review 2022 and recommended that:

1. Careful consideration be given to age designation in relation to location and property type.
2. The perspectives of tenants living within local and sensitive lettings be reflected in the Local Lettings Plan.
3. For a briefing to be held with the Panel, to provide advice and clarification relating to the Councils approach to public consultation.
4. Consideration be given to wider public consultation, to include people who were not on the housing register.
5. Information be included in the policy in relation to the Councils response to dealing with mould in properties within a timely manner.
6. A briefing be shared with the panel in relation to the Council response to dealing with mould in social housing.

8. Highways Safety Presentation

The Panel received a presentation in relation to Highways Safety presented by Mark Scarr, Head of Highways. It was highlighted that:

- The Council had statutory responsibilities set out by the 1988 Road Traffic Act which included:
 - The monitoring of all collisions reported to the police.

- Analysing and investigating circumstance and contributory factors.
- Developing yearly programmes of work and interventions.
- Undertaking road safety audits.
- Developing education and training packages.
- Revenue funding was available from the Council to address road safety concerns on a priority basis
- This was the first year of a five-year City Regional Sustainable Settlement of £900k per year, with an additional Council Capital borrowing of £250k per year and Highway Safety revenue funding of £577k per year.
- The total capital and revenue was £1.7 million per year.
- An additional bid had been put forward to the West Yorkshire Combined Authority for the outcome of the speed limit review.
- Data presented showed an increase in incidents for 2021 across West Yorkshire but there were no indications why.
- Data showed there had been a dip in 2020 but this was during the COVID - 19 Pandemic when fewer cars were on the roads.
- Kirklees Serious Injuries (KSI's) matched in comparison to West Yorkshire in relation to all severities but were higher in relation to motor vehicles but lower in relation to children up to the age of 16.
- The Vision Zero ambition was to eliminate road deaths and serious injuries (KSI's) to zero by 2040 and improve road safety for everyone using a safe systems approach.
- The five pillars to a safe system approach were:
 - Safe vehicles
 - Safe speeds
 - Safe roads
 - Safe behaviours
 - Post collision learning and care.
- Kirklees was just one of the internal road safety stakeholders involved in the Kirklees Road Safety Partnership.

The Panel highlighted the trends and benchmarking and suggested it would be helpful to be presented with the numbers. The Panel also shared their concerns regarding the 'vision zero' highlighting that the largest cause of accidents was driver behaviour. The Panel questioned how individual choices and behaviours could be changed and that more emphasis was needed in relation to enforcement, the actions being taken by the Council and making sure that this was a priority of the Police.

Mark Scarr, Head of Highways responded to agree that individual's behaviour was an important aspect and should be supported, influenced, and encouraged through partnerships. In relation to funding for school crossing patrols, Mark Scarr advised that funding was available but there had been issues with recruitment.

Graham West Service Director, Highways and Streetscene further advised that a review of each location would need to take place to check it met the criteria and to identify the type of crossing required.

The Panel highlighted the Community Partnership Strategy and the limited information relating to road safety and suggested it would be useful to understand in more detail what the Community Partnership Board did and its priorities.

Graham West responded to advise that road safety was a partnership and although there had been a reduction in road policing, regular meetings took place with the Chief Officer, as well as local communities, to share the Councils ambitions on how to improve road safety.

Graham West responded to the concerns regarding Vision Zero and advised that the ambition was challenging but that the Council would continue to promote, persuade and influence driver behaviours. Graham agreed that enforcement was key and that speed cameras would be deployed in a more proactive approach rather than a reactive approach. The Panel acknowledged the deployment of speed cameras and asked if more information in relation to their deployment could be shared.

Graham West responded to a concern raised by the Panel regarding White Lee Road and Norristhorpe Lane and agreed to contact the relevant Ward Councillors directly regarding the issues.

Graham West responded to a question from the Panel regarding the 900k regional settlement and the impact of the investment and advised that it was important to prioritise the resource to make sure the right interventions and areas were targeted, to ensure improvement.

The Panel asked a question in relation to the role poor-quality road surfaces and the re-instatement by Statutory Undertakers played in relation to accidents and asked if it could be monitored to understand if this was a contributing factor. The Panel also wanted to know if the number of fixed penalty notices that had been issued for poor re-instatement.

Graham West responded to advise that all work was focused on road safety and suggested that an update be given to a future meeting of the Economy and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Panel to expand on the number of openings, fixed penalty notices and what work had been done in relation to street work.

In respect of the issue of good quality road lines, Mark Scarr agreed that better lining contributed to safer roads and standards would rise across the borough.

RESOLVED: The Panel noted the Highway Safety Presentation and recommended that:

1. Figures in relation to trends and benchmarking be shared with the Panel.
2. More emphasis be placed on enforcement and actions taken by the Council.
3. Partnership working with the Police and others continued and be developed to ensure road safety was prioritised and enforcement taken.
4. Information be shared with the Panel in relation to the Community Partnership Board and its purpose.
5. The Council continued to promote, persuade and influence driver behaviours.

6. Information be shared with the Panel regarding the deployment of Speed Cameras.
7. Consideration be given to funding schools to provide their own in-house Crossing Patrol Service.
8. Consideration be given to making school routes safer and more attractive.
9. Consideration be given to extending the ring way.
10. Consideration be given to extending Modeshift training to level 3.
11. A conversation takes place between Officers and the relevant Ward Councillors in relation to concerns regarding White Lee Road and Norristhorpe Lane.
12. Officers to present to a future Economy and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Panel to expand on a number of openings, fixed penalty notices and what work had been done in relation to street work to provide confidence to the Panel.

9. Culture, Heritage and Tourism Strategy

The Panel considered a report setting out an update on the creation of three new inter-related strategies: a Cultural Strategy, a Heritage Strategy and a Tourism Strategy presented by Adele Poppleton, Service Director, Culture and Visitor Economy.

Councillor Will Simpson, Cabinet Member for Culture and Greener Kirklees was also in attendance and introduced the Strategy as being new, clear and ambitious, and would help to bring additional funds to Kirklees. Adele Poppleton, shared with the Panel a presentation and highlighted that:

The Cultural Strategy:

- The Cultural Strategy would be developed over the next 12 months and the focus of the Strategy was on arts, museums, archives and libraries.
- The Cultural Strategy was the overarching Strategy which provided clarity on what was to be achieved, why and how, and included:
 - The Heritage Strategy.
 - The Tourism Strategy.
 - The Libraries Plan.
 - Everybody Active Strategy.
- The Strategy had involved collaborative planning with partners and citizens and provided clarity regarding how Culture, Heritage and Tourism supported economic and social regeneration.
- Reputation management was important and identified that buildings at risk were being cared for and re-purposed.
- The strategies fed into other key strategies such as health and well-being, inclusive communities' framework etc.
- The Strategy complemented the Mayor of West Yorkshire's Culture, Heritage and Sport Framework.
- 50k had been funded from West Yorkshire Combined Authority and the Art Council to support the development of the Cultural Strategy and the delivery.

Heritage Strategy:

- The Draft Heritage Strategy had been produced and the consultation period would continue until the 8th January 2023.

- The Strategy reflected the Council's ambitions for Regeneration in relation to the town centre Blueprints, the Cultural Heart, and the vision and outcomes for improving people's lives in Kirklees.
- Kirklees were the only Local Authority within West Yorkshire who had developed a Heritage Strategy.
- The National Lottery Heritage Fund requested the production of the Heritage Strategy and provided funding through the Bringing out the Best Programme 2019-2021.
- Engagement had already taken place with local communities and underrepresented groups, and further engagement was planned.
- The museums and galleries service were a National Portfolio Organisation for Arts Council England for the next three years which brought in additional funding each year.
- The vision of the Strategy was a strong sense of identity, high positive profile, to raise conditions for heritage to thrive, support community needs, be inclusive and provide an award-winning heritage offer.
- It was important to take a confident approach, have strong business plans in place to ensure sustainability, be ambitious and engage with communities to find out what was important to them.
- Further funding was also being sought for the Strategic Action Plan (3 years initially).
- The Strategy was scheduled to go to Cabinet for approval in 2023.
- The Tourism Strategy was at a Draft stage, and external Consultants had identified that:
 - There was a need to define the produce base and the national positioning of Kirklees.
 - Revenue needed to increase year on year from tourism.
 - There was a need to reduce seasonality and provide an all-year round offer.
 - An increase in community-based tourism was needed.
 - An increased awareness of tourism within communities was needed in relation to economic and income benefits.
 - Kirklees offer was considered within the broader Yorkshire offer.
 - Trends nationally identified five key themes in relation to why people visited Kirklees, which included:
 - Visiting friends and family.
 - The history - industrial heritage and cultural events.
 - The villages, valley scenery, canals and filming locations.
 - Food and drink.
 - Walking and cycling.
 - 6 key strengths in Kirklees were identified and included:
 - Music festivals and culture.
 - Sport.
 - Food and drink.
 - Screen tourism.
 - Heritage.
 - Landscape and well-being.
 - It was important to maximise visitor interests in those aspects.

- The Tourism Strategy also supported the delivery of the Heritage Strategy, the Cultural Heart and work developed through Creative Kirklees.

The Panel highlighted the success in relation to Kirklees as an area being considered second in the world of Tourism and in the discussion to follow raised a number of questions.

Responding a question from the Panel in relation to the number of heritage risk assets and what was being done to save them, Adele Poppleton advised that there were 31 assets on the at-risk register, but the Council would seek to reduce that number.

The Panel highlighted the communication plan and the development of a heritage hub online and asked if this could also be used to make bookings. The Panel also suggested a Kirklees Heritage ticket be considered that would encourage people to visit various places across Kirklees.

Adele Poppleton noted the idea regarding the Kirklees Heritage ticket and advised in relation to bookings that this was separate to the Heritage Strategy, but the process was being looked at.

Responding to a question from the Panel about the future of the Toulson Museum (as an important part of Kirklees's heritage) Adele Poppleton advised that the Toulson Museum would not be a museum in the future and that services would be withdrawn, but that consideration was being given to other purposes for the building.

Adele Poppleton also acknowledged and agreed to the Panels request to add more detail in to the Strategy with regards to the variety of sporting activities within Kirklees.

The Panel shared that it would be useful to work with other experienced communities in relation to place based actioning planning and improving pathways and towpaths, and that consideration should also be given to suitable accommodation.

Responding to a question from the Panel regarding the National Coal Mining Museum being listed in Wakefield, Adele Poppleton advised that work was ongoing with the National Coal Mining Museum to claim it as a visitor centre within Kirklees.

Responding to a question the Panel regarding the Councils financial investment in John Smiths Stadium, Adele Poppleton explained that there were some limitations in relation to the outdoor use and proximity to residents.

The Panel noted the Library Plan and highlighted the importance of libraries bringing together cultural events outside of town centres and suggested it would be useful to know more.

The Panel highlighted that consultation was open and shared that it would be useful to have some information that could be shared on social media platforms to get more people involved and engaging. The Panel also raised concerns in relation to communication and engagement and asked what plans were in place to increase the engagement and get people more involved?

Councillor Will Simpson, responded to the Panels concerns and agreed that strategies needed to be developed in relation to communication and digital communication that represented Kirklees as good, but that resource limitation was a Council wide issue.

Adele Poppleton responded to a query from the Panel regarding the Council's unique selling point for tourists and advised it was the Cultural Heart, and the development of a new museum and gallery within the town centre.

Kath Wynne-Hague, Head of Culture and Tourism responded to a question in relation to woollen mills and advised that there was a woven festival biannual and that there was no visitor attraction mill but that Colne Valley had an historic site.

Adele Poppleton further added that the aim was to be able to show the history of the textile industry, not just the past, but the innovation that was influencing the textile industry across the world.

Adele Poppleton responded to a query from the Panel regarding alternative funding streams and advised that having the Heritage Strategy in place made funding stream more accessible and that the Arts Council were keen to increase their investment in Kirklees as they were impressed with the leadership and direction the Council were taking. Adele also shared in terms of levelling up that the Arts Council would be consulted, and in turn, that would help attract government funding.

Councillor Will Simpson shared that Kirklees was identified by the Arts Council as a priority place due to its ambition and would be much closer to the top of the list for investment, and that having the strategies in place would deliver for Kirklees.

RESOLVED: The Panel noted the Culture, Heritage and Tourism Strategy and thanked officers for their work. It was recommended that:

1. More detail in relation to different sporting activities across the borough be included in the Strategy.
2. Careful consideration be given to the future of Toulson Museum and the importance of it being part of Kirklees Heritage.
3. Information be provided to the Panel in relation to the Library Plan.
4. Partnership working with other experienced communities in relation to place based actioning planning and improving pathways would be useful.
5. Consideration should be given to identifying suitable accommodation.

6. Information be shared with Councillors in relation to the consultation that can be shared through social media platform in an effort to increase engagement.
7. An effective communication and marketing strategy be developed around Culture Heritage and Tourism.

10. Work Programme 2022/23

RESOLVED: The Panel noted the work programme 2022/23 and agreed that:

1. Arrangement be made for further information to be shared with the panel in relation to public consultation.
2. The item in relation to bus patronage be considered at a future Economy and Neighbourhoods meeting within the 2022/23 municipal year.