

Kirklees Council

Scrutiny Lead Member Report

Lead Member: Cllr John Taylor

Panel: Corporate Scrutiny Panel

Period of Update: **From:** 16 January 2023 **To:** 06 March 2023

Panel Highlights

(Include examples of pre-decision work, scrutiny getting out and about, etc)

Lead member briefings with:

- Eamonn Croston, Service Director Finance
- Martin Dearnley, Head of Risk, IT and Transactional Services
- Alice Carruthers, Senior Finance Officer
- Andy Simcox, Service Director Strategy, and Innovation
- Terence Hudson, Head of IT
- Marcus Bowell Head of Communications

Panel meeting – 16 January 2023

The Panel received reports on the financial issues impacting on the Council and information on the Council's risk management arrangements. With the current financial situation facing the council, and the cost-of-living crisis impacting on local communities, the Panel questioned whether the actions being taken to manage the council finances were robust enough. The Panel also sought assurance that measures were being put in place to support local communities.

The panel discussed how the Council's corporate risks could be better aligned/linked to the Council's financial reserves, so the level of financial resilience reserves reflected the perceived financial risks to the Council. It was agreed that this was work which was under review and was reflective of the risk heat map approach which was new and shared with the panel.

Library visit

Members of the Panel have been invited to see the new library facilities in Birbky/Fartown, to see how the library supports local communities, for example warm spaces. The date of the visit is to be confirmed.

Panel meeting – 6 March 2023

The Panel will next meet on the 6th March and will consider information on the Technology Strategy, Communication Strategy and will have an informal session on Cyber Security.

Members of Corporate Scrutiny Panel also attended the finance training arranged by Corporate Governance and Audit Committee on the 17th January 2023.

Outcomes:

Monitoring Work

(If monitoring previous recommendations please identify what difference Scrutiny has made)

With the current financial situation facing local government and the cost of living crisis affecting local residents, the panel feels that it is important to continue to monitor the actions being taken to manage the councils finances and support local communities.

Looking Ahead

(What are the next issues the Panel plans to look at?)

The Panel meeting on the 6th March will be the last meeting of the 2022/23 municipal year. Looking forward to 2023/24, the Panel will again decide on its priorities and prepare a work programme. This will include further work on financial issues and will pick up the delayed review of the HR Strategy and also a focus on data and intelligence and the linkage across to the Corporate Plan.

The main focus in this period has been on scrutinising the ongoing financial challenges faced by the Council and testing whether the Panel felt that adequate action was being taken. The importance of supporting those in the community who were particularly hit by the inflationary impacts was also raised and assurances sought.

This is an ongoing piece of monitoring by Scrutiny and is likely to remain a focus through into the next year. The Panel had been due to receive a progress update on the HR Strategy work at its meeting in March, however, given that there is currently a vacancy freeze and resources have been diverted to support the vacancy management work, a request was made to postpone this as no work was currently being undertaken to progress the HR Strategy.