

Contact Officer: Leigh Webb

KIRKLEES COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Tuesday 20th June 2023

Present: Councillor Elizabeth Smaje (Chair)
Councillor Bill Armer
Councillor Andrew Cooper
Councillor Yusra Hussain

Apologies: Councillor Jackie Ramsay

3 Membership of Committee

Apologies were received from Councillor Jackie Ramsay.

4 Minutes of Previous Meetings

The minutes of the meetings held on 18th April and 24th May 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

5 Interests

Councillor Hussain declared a personal interest in respect of Item 9 below, Kirklees Armed Forces Covenant Progress Report, as an employee of a neighbouring NHS Trust (Bradford).

6 Admission of the Public

All agenda items were considered in public.

7 Deputations/Petitions

No deputations or petitions were received.

8 Public Question Time

There were no questions from members of the public.

9 Kirklees Armed Forces Covenant - Progress Report

A report was submitted providing the Committee with an update on the work of the Kirklees Armed Forces Covenant Board since the introduction of the Armed Forces Bill in 2021.

Councillor Naheed Mather, Cabinet Member for Culture and Greener Kirklees was in attendance and introduced the report which set out details of the Covenant Duty along with the progress and achievements in Kirklees. The Kirklees Armed Forces Covenant Board had been established in 2013 to encourage services and partners to offer support to the local armed forces community to make it easier for Service Personnel families and veterans to access the help and support available for the Ministry of Defence, from statutory providers and from the charitable and voluntary sector. Inclusive Communities Framework. It was reported that the Armed Forces

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Act 2021 placed a legal duty on specified public persons and bodies to have due regard to the principles of the Covenant when exercising certain statutory duties and functions in respect of healthcare, education and housing.

It was explained that disadvantage in service delivery most frequently occurs through a lack of understanding of the unique obligations and circumstances of the Armed Forces Community. The aim of the new Duty is to build awareness among service providers of the Covenant's principles and the Armed Forces Community.

The report set out an update on the progress and achievements in Kirklees based on the existing good practice contained within the Armed Forces Covenant Duty Guidance on how bodies can raise awareness of Armed Forces issues. It highlighted areas where good progress is being made and other areas that could also be considered.

Questions and comments were invited from the Committee Members, with the following issues being covered:

- The importance of ensuring visibility and promoting the covenant was stressed as a means of raising awareness and increasing participation from partners and from within the Council.
- In respect of frontline staff training it was suggested that this should be a requirement for staff and that statistical information be collated to monitor take up
- Members acknowledged that things were still evolving as to how the covenant is applied
- In response to a question about the limitations of the Covenant in respect of housing, Vina Randhawa, Democracy Manager, explained that a 'champion' from Housing Solutions was a member of the Partnership Board to help Armed Forces personnel navigate the housing application process.
- It was noted that there was no formal arrangements with Mental Health Trusts and Integrated Care Boards to ensure the Covenant is adhered to.
- With regard to the budgetary situation it was noted that £20k had been set aside to support work on the Covenant. This is currently funded by way of one off contribution met from reserves and it was reported that the Council could not commit to mainstreaming the budget but work will continue to look into budget provision in collaboration with partners.
- The importance of consulting with the local armed forces community was raised as a means of measuring whether the application of the Covenant is working.

Resolved –

- 1) That the update on the work of the Kirklees Armed Forces Board, including the ongoing work with partner and voluntary organisations be noted.
- 2) That the work with housing services to help Armed Forces Personnel navigate the housing process be welcomed.
- 3) That the budget position in relation to the Armed Forces Covenant be noted.
- 4) That a survey be developed to hear the voice and understand the need of Armed Services personnel locally

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- 5) That discussions be undertaken with health organisations to allow the Council to understand how they are working with the Covenant.
- 6) That statistical information relating to the take up of e-learning training be provided in future updates to the Committee.

10 Council Financial Management

The Committee received a presentation providing an overview of the Council's financial position which included an update on the latest outturn position that had recently been reported. It was highlighted that the provisional revenue outturn position for 2022/23 was for an overspend of £27m, which was an improvement on the figure of £32m that had been reported at Quarter 3. The overspend had been funded from the use of Council reserves which had resulted in reserves being reduced from £122m to £84m. With regard to the cost of living variances that had contributed to the overspend it was explained that there were three main components namely, the pay award, energy inflation and food and fuel inflation.

The presentation set out detail service variances that had resulted in overspends by respective departments across the Council, which included continued reduced income following Covid, demand pressures and treasury management issues. Details of the Capital Programme outturn for 2022/23 was reported to the Committee which had resulted in a £31.5m underspend. The presentation provided an update in respect of the current 2023/24 budget position and the planned Capital Programme for 2023-2028.

Questions and comments were invited from the Committee Members, with the following issues being covered:

- With regard to the underspend on the 2022/23 capital programme it was confirmed that the underspend had already been forecast and factored in as part of the 2023/24 budget.
- All directorates are looking at fees and charges in respect of existing income lines and potential new income lines. The corporate fees and charges review is currently underway with plans to report in October 2023. Whilst acknowledging the need to review fees and charges the committee highlighted that any potential increases needed to be affordable to the residents of Kirklees.
- With regard to the timescales for the cultural heart it was acknowledged that financial challenges could result in the project taking longer than originally planned.
- The increased cost of borrowing and its impact on the budget this has been factored into the budget to some extent. It was reported that prudential borrowing means that in some cases borrowing can be delayed and treasury management measures used to manage the cost of borrowing.
- With regard to the shortfall in parking income it was reported that a review of parking had been agreed as part of the 2023/24 budget.

Resolved - That regular updates be received by this Committee in line with financial reporting timescales with additional updates in between the quarterly reporting cycle to allow for scrutiny of any particular areas of financial concern.

11 Allocation of Co-optees 2023-24

The Committee was asked to consider the allocation of co-optees to the Scrutiny Panels, for the 2023/24 municipal year.

RESOLVED:

1. That the allocation of scrutiny co-optees for the 2023/24 municipal year, as set out in paragraph 2.4, be agreed subject to the removal of Toni Bromley from the Children's Panel.
2. That the existing serving co-optees be thanked for their continued commitment and contribution to the work of scrutiny in Kirklees.
3. That the following retiring co-optees be thanked for their contribution to the work of scrutiny:
Toni Bromley
Kristina Parkes
James Ryan
Graeme Sunderland