

Kirklees Council

Scrutiny Lead Member Report

Lead Member: Councillor Jo Lawson

Panel: Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Panel

Period of Update: From November 2023 to January 2024

Overview of Panel Activity and Meetings

Lead member Briefings:

- **14th November 2023** – The Chair, the Cabinet Member for Environment and the Service Director for Highways and Streetscene met with regards to the forward plan and the Panel's forward programme of work
- **12th December 2023** – The Chair, the Service Director for Highways and Streetscene, the Head of Highways and the Head of Operations met with regards to the items on the agenda for the meeting of the Panel held 10th January 2024.
- **13th December 2023** – The Chair and David Shepherd, Strategic Director for Growth and Regeneration, met with regards to the forward plan and the Panel's forward programme of work.

Meeting of the Panel held 6th December 2023:

- Call in of Cabinet Decision in relation to the Revision of Car Parking Tariffs/Charges.

Meeting of the Panel held 10th January 2024:

- Kirklees Highways Safety Update
- 2 Year Highways Capital Plan Update

Key Highlights and Outcomes

Call in of Cabinet Decision in relation to the Revision of Car Parking Tariffs/Charges.

At the meeting held on 6th December 2023 the Scrutiny Panel considered the grounds of a call-in request, in respect of the final decision taken by Cabinet on 14 November 2023 to relating to the Revision of Car Parking Tariffs/Charges.

The two decision making areas which were the focus of the call-in review meeting were;

- Clarity – Issues related to clarity of aims and desired outcomes, including clarity of cost or revenue implications of the decision.
- Options: No details of the reasons for the decision or the alternative options

considered were presented as part of the Cabinet report.

At the review meeting the Scrutiny Panel considered verbal submissions from councillors who were signatories to the call in and views from ward councillors affected by the decision. The Panel also considered the response of the Cabinet Member and senior officers of from Highways and Streetscene.

Outcomes: that the decision taken in relation to car parking charges be freed for implementation.

In respect of the decision the Panel, wish to make the following comments as learning points:

- (1) That within all future Cabinet reports the reasons for the decision, the financial implications and options considered should be included.
- (2) The Panel were satisfied with the level of financial detail provided at today's meeting, and request that this be included in the future report to the meeting of the Cabinet Committee (Local Issues).
- (3) The Panel acknowledged the value and importance of pre-decision scrutiny process which may have mitigated the call-in. Whilst acknowledging the urgency of the decision every effort should be made in future to factor in pre-decision scrutiny.

Kirklees Highways Safety Update

At the meeting held on 10th January 2024 the Panel considered the Kirklees Highways Safety Update report which set out the work delivered within the financial year (2023/24).

The Panel were informed that the Council had a statutory duty under the 1988 Road Traffic Act Section 39 to promote road safety through education, training, engineering, and publicity. These responsibilities were administrated by the Highway Safety Team and included Casualty Reduction, Community Traffic Measures and Road Safety.

The key ambitions of the work of the Highways team were establishing patterns of behaviour for the next generation, supporting the councils shared ambitions to the climate change agenda, supporting active travel and making a meaningful contribution to keeping communities safe and healthy.

Key highlights of work undertaken noted by the Cabinet Member for Housing and Highways included an extensive education programme to support the safety of young people and to support the Councils shared 2038 climate change targets. This included delivery of; training programmes to 4847 school children, 6456 'Bikeability' training sessions and the 'Theatre in Education Programme' which had been delivered to 1360 secondary school children. Alongside the comprehensive training programme, was the promotion of the mode shift programme and once schools had signed up there had been demonstrable reduction in car use by 6.3%.

Outcomes:

In the discussion that followed, the Panel explored several issues including the scope of the school streets trial, the collision data, the reduction in casualty figures and the possible link to preventative measures, the plans to expand the Modeshift programme and the future promotion of Vision 0. The Panel further noted the following key points made recommendations as follows:

1. Driver behaviour was a key influential and unavoidable factor resulting in collisions and it was recommended that the collision data be filtered to differentiate between avoidable and unavoidable cases, highlighting where targeted action could be taken.
2. There was a need to understand more about the difference between the nature of collisions in urban and rural areas, and it was recommended that the collision data be filtered to demonstrate this.
3. There were concerns that multiple minor incidents in one location were not recorded in the data and it was recommended that ways to record multiple minor incidents be investigated.
4. It was highlighted that it was important to showcase examples of success in relation to interventions made in high-risk areas to demonstrate which schemes were effective, it was recommended that officers undertake work to highlight successful outcomes.

2 Year Highways Capital Plan Update

At the meeting held on 10th January 2024, the Panel considered a report setting out the progress of the 2 Year Highways Capital Plan 2023/24 and 2024/25.

The Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Housing and Highways explained that the programme was essential as well-maintained highways were safer and led to a reduction in carbon emissions. It was through this programme of work, that Kirklees kept the road network running smoothly despite challenges such as the impact of climate change, increased traffic and funding issues. The City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) which funded a large portion of the programme stipulated the promotion of active travel, public transport, and modal shift which in turn supported the Councils 2038 climate change ambitions. Highlights of the work undertaken included the street lighting programme - leading to a significant reduction in electric use over time, the LBUR programme, and the continuing maintenance of the PROW network.

Outcomes:

In the discussion to follow, the Panel explored several issues including the; inspection frequency of roads, the governance arrangements, how changes to national policy and climate change targets might impact local schemes, the process for removing hazards on the highways, the approach to bringing street lights in line with current standards and highways drainage. The Panel also particularly welcomed the commitment to good governance, and the emphasis of net zero and climate change objectives in the report.

The Panel further noted the following key points made recommendations as follows:

1. Gratitude was expressed to the Highways team for the work undertaken over

the Christmas period during the inclement weather, and it was agreed that thanks be given to officers.

2. In relation to Speed Indicator Devices (SIDS), it was clarified that there could be room for minor alternations to the location of a SID and if residents or ward councillors had suggestions or questions, they should contact the service by email. In response to a request from a Panel member with regards to updates of future moves and planned locations it was agreed that the specific area be investigated.
3. In relation to the potential impact changes to national policy and climate change targets may have on local schemes, it was agreed for a discussion to be held with officers in the Councils Transportation team and for an update to be provided to the Panel thereafter.
4. In relation to Highways drainage, the importance of minimising flooding from blocked drains to mitigate the risk of further damage to the highways was noted. It was advised that due to the budget, a reactive approach to blocked drains was currently taken but a review of funding was to be undertaken with the ambition to re-introduce a limited amount of cyclic cleaning. It was also highlighted that the Council could only clear gullies on the public highway and that clearing blockages in private carrier drains relied on working closely with Yorkshire Water and Private Landowners. It was further agreed that the specific location where there were issues with blocked drains raised by the Co-optee be visited and investigated.
5. It was requested that further opportunities for pre-decision scrutiny in respect of the Capital Plan be considered.

General Comments from the Chair

The Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny panel has had a very full work schedule to date but each report presented has had a very robust scrutiny by the panel with recommendations often put forward. I would like to thank the panel and officers for their help and support during my time as Chair.

Looking Ahead

At upcoming meetings of the Panel in 2023/24, the following items are to be considered:

- Environment Sustainability Strategy
- Parks and Greenspace Vision
- Events (Woven/Pride/Year of Music)