

Contact Officer: Yolande Myers

KIRKLEES COUNCIL

CABINET

Tuesday 20th February 2024

Present: Councillor Cathy Scott (Chair)
Councillor Paul Davies
Councillor Graham Turner
Councillor Viv Kendrick
Councillor Jackie Ramsay
Councillor Mussarat Pervaiz
Councillor Moses Crook
Councillor Aafaq Butt

Observers: Councillor Martyn Bolt
Councillor Charles Greaves
Councillor Adam Gregg
Councillor Bernard McGuin
Councillor Imran Safdar
Councillor Will Simpson

Apologies: Councillor Elizabeth Reynolds

140 Membership of Cabinet

Apologies were received on behalf of Cllr Elizabeth Reynolds.

141 Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

142 Admission of the Public

It was noted that all items would be considered in public session.

143 Deputations/Petitions

No deputations or petitions were received.

144 Questions by Members of the Public

Cabinet received questions under Executive Procedure Rule 2.3.

Question from James Brown

“Kirklees Council is currently using the Old Golf House Hotel in Outlane for temporary accommodation, resulting in many issues and concerns for those being accommodated and especially for Outlane residents, including policing, safeguarding, financial cost to the public, a lack of (specialised and non-specialised) facilities, no functioning kitchen at the Hotel (with the kitchen condemned due to

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structural issues) and poor public transport links. The Hotel had already been rejected due to issues and concerns in 2021 by the Home Office/Mears for accommodating asylum seekers. Kirklees Council has refused to cooperate with Freedom of Information Requests on important points from concerned Outlane residents, citing that information cannot be released as it may put those linked to the Hotel at risk, even though Kirklees Council has made information on the Council using the Hotel public for months through Expenditure Data. This has created a form of cover up. Why is Kirklees Council still using the Hotel when there are issues and concerns and why is Kirklees Council not addressing those issues and concerns?"

A response was provided from the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Highways (Councillor Moses Crook)

Question from Sherene Tyrell

"In relation to the report on the Registration Service, what work has been done to be certain that all statutory functions can be delivered with a reduction of 9.2 full time equivalents, or any reduction?"

A response was provided from the Portfolio Holder for Corporate (Councillor Paul Davies)

Question from Helen Tye

"Are all councillors cognisant of the fact that the proposed measures, as outlined in the cabinet paper regarding Strength Based Integrated Library and Customer Service Functions and Assets, entail the complete withdrawal of in-person assistance for services such as Blue Badge applications, Council Tax enquiries, Housing Benefit, and Travel Passes, and a range of other support services and referrals?"

A response was provided from the Portfolio Holder for Corporate (Councillor Paul Davies)

Question from Helen Tye

"In relation to the report on Strength Based Integrated Library and Customer Service Functions and Assets what provisions are in place to ensure that customers with significant mental health issues, visual and hearing impairments, and other forms of deprivation, receive the necessary support in the absence of in-person assistance?"

A response was provided from the Portfolio Holder for Corporate (Councillor Paul Davies)

145 Questions by Elected Members (Oral Questions)

Cabinet received oral questions under Executive Procedure Rule 2.3.

Question from Councillor Charles Greaves

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“When will the consultation on parking charges commence, and what will be the process?”

A response was provided by the Portfolio Holder for Culture and Greener Kirklees (Councillor Aafaq Butt)

Question from Councillor Alison Munro

“It came as a shock that Valley View Care Home is to close. Can you tell me if there are sufficient places in other care homes to meet needs?”

A response was provided by the Portfolio Holder for Health and Social Care (Councillor Jackie Ramsay)

Question from Councillor Will Simpson

“I have had a Denby Dale Conservative Parish Councillor publish on public forums that they know my family’s address and have encouraged people to come to my home to abuse me. I have also received a threatening letter through my door, which refers to my personal health. A crime of harassment has been recorded by West Yorkshire Police. Does the Leader agree with me that this kind of attempted intimidation is not an acceptable way for a representative of a political party to behave?”

A response was provided by the Leader of the Council (Councillor Cathy Scott)

Question from Councillor Martyn Bolt

“Why are members of the public not allowed to submit questions remotely, rather than making them attend Cabinet meetings, except in exceptional circumstances, adding to carbon emissions, and which may mean for some people taking half a day off work. Can we take those questions remotely?”

A response was provided by the Leader of the Council (Councillor Cathy Scott)

Question from Councillor Adam Gregg

“I have recently been contacted by residents who have expressed heartbreak at the removal of trees on Queensgate. Can I ask, are there any plans to remove any trees on Queen Street as part of the Cultural Heart?”

A response was provided by the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Regeneration (Councillor Graham Turner)

Question from Councillor Charles Greaves

“What were the objective measures used to determine which libraries would be integrated, which would be community supported and which would be community managed?”

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A response was provided by the Portfolio Holder for Corporate (Councillor Paul Davies)

Question from Councillor Charles Greaves

“Honley library receives 15 hours a week of officer time, Meltham receives 20 hours, neither receive any contribution from Kirklees towards their building costs. If the other six libraries that are proposed to be community managed have similar hours of opening, how has the saving of £912k been calculated?”

A response was provided by the Portfolio Holder for Corporate (Councillor Paul Davies)

Question from Councillor Bernard McGuin

“Who took the decision to claw back the ward councillor budgets?”

A response was provided by the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Regeneration (Councillor Graham Turner)

Question from Councillor Imran Safdar

“Residents are concerned that libraries and Citizens Advice Bureaus could be closing. The impression is that Huddersfield may well be downgraded as the de facto centre of Kirklees. Will Dewsbury be the new centre of Kirklees?”

A response was provided by the Leader of the Council (Councillor Cathy Scott)

Question from Councillor Alison Munro

“Where is the evidence to support that the footfall to the Huddersfield Library at its new site location has been maintained at the rate it had at its original location?”

A response was provided by the Portfolio Holder for Corporate (Councillor Paul Davies)

Question from Councillor Will Simpson

“We have had the announcement about the important step taken on the reduction in Member allowances, can we be provided with the impact on those reductions due to the new Independent Group?”

A response was provided by the Leader of the Council (Councillor Cathy Scott)

Question from Councillor Martyn Bolt

“A previous Cabinet Member said it was meaningless and no one would make any make any reasonable judgement on the consultation returns for Heckmondwike three years ago which were incredibly low, given the equally low returns for the Heckmondwike Blueprint, were they right?”

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A response was provided by the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Regeneration (Councillor Graham Turner)

146 **Corporate Financial Monitoring Report - Quarter 3 for 2023-24**

Cabinet received the Corporate Financial Monitoring Report, Quarter 3, 2023/24. The report provided information on financial monitoring for General Fund Revenue, Housing Revenue Account and Capital Plan.

In summary, the report set out a forecast overspend of £9.9m for Quarter 3 with savings forecast to be delivered at 100% against a target of £19.9m. It advised that total useable reserves were forecast to be c£43m by 31 March 2024 of which unallocated reserves were forecast to be £22m and earmarked reserves were forecast to be £21m.

The report provided information on (i) the forecast General Fund revenue outturn position in 2023/2024 by service area (ii) General Fund reserves and balances movements in year (iii) forecast Housing Revenue Account revenue outturn position, including movements in Housing Revenue Account reserves in-year (iv) forecast capital outturn position 2023/2024 and (v) treasury management prudential indicators.

RESOLVED –

- 1) That the forecast revenue outturn position at Quarter 3 for 2023/24 (£9.9m overspend), and the forecast year end position on the Council's reserves and balances: £55.8m Reserves, of which £43.8m were Usable Reserves (£47.4m Reserves, of which £35.4m were Usable at Q2) be noted.
- 2) That the Quarter 3 forecast HRA position (£600k surplus) and forecast year-end reserves position be noted.
- 3) That the Quarter 3 forecast capital monitoring position for 2023/24 with regards to Capital (£2.7m underspend) be noted.
- 4) That approval be given to the re-profiling of the 2023/24 capital plan reduction since Council Budget Report of £27.8m being
 - (i) +£1.24m grants (Housing DFG/Climate Emergency/Active Travel Fund)
 - (ii) -£29.1m re-profile (£13.8m/self-financed, £11.5m grants/S106, £0.7m receipts, HRA RCCO/Reserves £3.1m)
- 5) That the Quarter 3 treasury management prudential indicators be noted.

147 **Council Tax provisions within the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 - empty property and second homes (Reference to Council)**

Cabinet received a report which detailed new powers available to local authorities as legislated for the in Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 in relation to long term empty properties and empty homes.

The report set out the facility for a Billing Authority to determine that it would (i) reduce the qualifying period for the long-term empty property premium in Council Tax to one year to be effective from 1 April 2024 and (ii) charge a 100% Council Tax premium for second homes (dwellings which are furnished but unoccupied) to be effective from 1 April 2025.

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Cabinet was advised that the decision to make such a determination could only be made by council in accordance with s67 Local Government Finance Act 1992, and it must be made before 31st March 2024.

It was noted that data suggested there were 587 properties in the borough that would be empty for one year but less than two years as at 1st April 2024. Although the properties would attract a 100% premium it was impossible to know what the impact of the exceptions referred to in Appendix 1 of the considered report would have. Cabinet noted that if all those properties became chargeable with a 100% premium it would equate to £953k additional revenue, although it was anticipated that many properties would be brought back into use and the premium would cease to apply.

RESOLVED – That the report be referred to Council on 6 March 2024 with a recommendation that: -

- 1) The qualifying period for the long-term empty property premium in Council Tax be reduced to one year effective from 1st April 2024; and
- 2) A 100% Council Tax premium for second homes (dwellings which are furnished, but unoccupied) be introduced effective from 1st April 2025.
- 3) Authority be delegated to the Council's Section 151 Officer In conjunction with the portfolio holder to enable them to amend the policy and / or any associated procedures to ensure alignment with the regulations or statutory guidance relating to the exemptions from the premiums, when these are issued or subsequently amended by Government.

148 Strength Based Integrated Community Library and Customer Service Functions & assets

(Under the provision of Council Procedure Rule 36(1), Cabinet received representations from Councillor Bolt, Councillor Greaves, Councillor Gregg and Councillor Safdar).

Cabinet gave consideration to a report which proposed the development of a strength based integrated community library model. The proposal included the integration of the customer service function into the library estate. This would result in the reshaping of the existing two main customer service centre sites in Huddersfield and Dewsbury into an integrated offer in those respective libraries, alongside access to digital and telephony support across the library network.

Cabinet noted the proposal was also to establish the feasibility of developing a community managed library model with targeted community-based libraries. The initial focus for the feasibility would be on identified libraries with the foundational characteristics to deliver successful transition (community strengths, community demographics, capacity, and resources).

Cabinet was advised that engagement with the eight identified libraries would commence to explore the feasibility of transition into community managed libraries.

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Once feasibility had been established, subsequent proposals would be considered by Cabinet at a later date to enable further decision making.

RESOLVED –

- 1) That authority be given to the overall approach to integrate the customer service and library functions.
- 2) That authority be given to commence a service change process to reduce both management and frontline staffing to achieve integration and savings.
- 3) That authority be given to commence engagement with community partners around the proposed community managed libraries model.
- 4) That the contents of the initial Integrated Impact Assessment be noted.

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Registration Service

(Under the provision of Council Procedure Rule 36(1), Cabinet received representations from Councillor Gregg and Councillor Bolt).

Cabinet considered a report which sought approval to consult with the General Registrar office (GRO) to redesign the Registration Service.

The report advised that since 2012 the council had delivered registration services in both Huddersfield and Dewsbury providing services across the full functionality of a Registration Service. The financial challenges of the council required a review of the service delivery model as providing full-service delivery at both sites was no longer sustainable or fully efficient.

Cabinet was advised that the consultation with the GRO would seek approval from them to redesign the Registration Service with options to (i) consolidate into a central main site for delivering all Registration services although wedding ceremonies would still take place at Dewsbury Town Hall and at wedding venues across North Kirklees and (ii) needs led support - with the impact of this reviewed and adjustments considered in light of the experience, including holistic support to individuals and the feasibility of offering place-based service delivery where need was identified.

The report outlined supporting information and data used to aid decision making and the identification of which site would minimise the impact for residents on moving to full-service delivery at one site only. It was noted from data collated in 2022/23 that the Huddersfield site saw the highest usage, and that in total 2,245 people who used the Dewsbury office out of a total North Kirklees population of circa 190,000 would need to travel to Huddersfield. This meant that 1.2% of the population of North Kirklees would potentially have been affected in 22/23 had the change already taken place.

RESOLVED –

- 1) That authority be given for the Registration service to consult with and obtain the required approval from the General Registration Office (GRO) on the proposed new local scheme.

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- 2) That it be noted that any consolidation to one central site would only be agreed following due process with the GRO.
- 3) That authority be given to re-design the Registration Service including options to (i) consolidate into a central main site in Huddersfield for delivering all Registration services with wedding ceremonies still taking place at Dewsbury Town Hall and at wedding venues across North Kirklees, (ii) for Needs led support – ensuring that the impact of consolidation be reviewed, and adjustments considered in light of the experience, including holistic support to individuals and the feasibility of offering place-based service delivery where the need was identified.
- 4) That a full review of the Registration Service fees and charges set by the council be made annually based on benchmarking with other local Registration districts and implemented in year from 2025/26 and reviewed annually thereafter.
- 5) That it be noted the final decision would only be made following the consultation with, and approval from, the GRO and that authority be delegated to the Strategic Director for Adults and Health in consultation with the cabinet portfolio holder for a decision on site arrangements.

150 New Commissioning approach for Domestic Abuse Support Services

Cabinet considered a report which sought approval to change the Councils approach to commissioning Domestic Abuse support services using external grant funding.

The report outlined the proposal to commission an outcomes-based contract (duration 60 months commencing on April 1st, 2024) with Kirklees Better Outcomes Partnership (KBOP) to deliver domestic abuse support services. KBOP would subcontract the frontline delivery on a fee recovery basis to the best placed local providers.

Cabinet was advised that KBOP provided services at risk (they have social investors), which meant they would not receive payment from the Council unless they could evidence those outcomes had been achieved. This should lead to better outcomes for service users, as delivery organisations were provided with the strongest possible incentives to deliver needs met services which would aim to (i) reduce the risk of harm (ii) reduce symptoms of trauma (iii) improve independence and wellbeing (iv) improve multiagency co-ordination and (v) improve access to services.

The report outlined that KBOP would be required to collate evidence of the impact of services on the people who use them, and the Council would then pay via the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities grant and Public Health grant for the successful achievement of positive outcomes.

RESOLVED –

- 1) That authority be given to change the Councils approach to commissioning domestic abuse support services enabling 60-month outcomes-based contract to be entered into with Kirklees Better Outcomes Partnership

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(KBOP) part of Bridge Outcome Partnership (BOP), to commence on the 1 April 2024;

2) That authority be delegated to officers to execute the agreed contract.

151 **Local Flood Risk Management Strategy 2024**

(Under the provision of Council Procedure Rule 36(1), Cabinet received representations from Councillor Munro and Councillor Bolt).

Cabinet considered the new Local Flood Risk Management Strategy 2024 for adoption. The strategy was needed to adapt the Council's approach in line with current science and thinking to give communities the best chance, in light of the risk of flooding in England being predicted to increase due to factors such as climate change and growth in the Council's demographic.

The report advised that the new strategy would have strengthened focus on (i) creating resilient communities with build-back better approach (ii) increasing emphasis on nature based solutions (iii) being adaptive in responding to new climate hazards (iv) working together with communities around awareness and shared responsibilities and (v) the Council's commitment in responding to severe weather events.

Cabinet noted that the new Local Strategy would be consistent with the National Strategy which would support the Council's funding applications in securing investment into the district. It would also better align with the nature of the flood risk within the district and the support for communities.

RESOLVED – That the new Local Flood Risk Management Strategy 2024 be adopted.

152 **Admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools in 2025/26**

Cabinet gave consideration to a report which sought to determine admission arrangements for all Kirklees Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools for the 2025-2026 year. It was noted that arrangements needed to be determined by 28 February 2024, in order to comply with the requirements of the Schools Admission Code.

Cabinet was advised that evidence showed a period of declining child population year on year entering school at Reception. Future indications were that this decline would continue, and the priority to continue to engage with the school system about opportunities to reduce the number of available places where there was evidence of a significant surplus, was declared in the 2023 School Place Planning Document in relation to the primary phase.

The proposals for community and voluntary controlled schools for the 2025/26 admissions year included (i) reducing the PAN from 90 to 60 for Purwell Infant & Nursery School and (ii) reducing the PAN from 60 to 30 for Savile Town CE (VC) I & N School.

RESOLVED –

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- 1) That approval be given to the Kirklees co-ordinated admission schemes for 2025/26 including in-year admissions, as set out in Appendix 2;
- 2) That approval be given for the admission arrangements for Kirklees community and voluntary controlled schools as detailed in Appendix 1C;
- 3) That approval be given for the PANs for each community and voluntary controlled school set out in appendix 1D of the considered report which include: (i) Purlwell I & N School – PAN decrease from 90 to 60 in 2025/26 and (ii) Savile Town CE (VC) I & N School – PAN decrease from 60 to 30 in 2025/26.