

Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report

2023/24



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Chair's Foreword

The start of 2023/24 municipal year saw the appointment of four Scrutiny Panel Chairs and a number of new Scrutiny Chairs were appointed during the year and I would like to thank these members for their hard work and contributions.

I would also like to pay particular tribute to our eight Voluntary Co-optees, for their valuable input to the scrutiny process in Kirklees, and express my gratitude to all the local groups, organisations and individuals who have attended meetings, made presentations and provided evidence. Council officers and Cabinet Members are also to be thanked for their attendance and contributions to the scrutiny process.



Council, in January 2023, agreed to the following recommendations, as proposed by the Democracy Commission, that:

- A review of Scrutiny be undertaken (which has resulted in the current structure)
- There should be an increased focus on pre-decision scrutiny; and
- Scrutiny Training be provided to all Councillors, Scrutiny Members and Chairs.

I am pleased to see that pre-decision scrutiny is becoming an integral part of the Scrutiny process. This is helping to ensure that Scrutiny is given the opportunity to have an input, be consulted and comment on key decisions being taken by the Council and policy development and is able to make recommendations which can be included in the Cabinet reports.

I can also confirm that Scrutiny Training was provided to Councillors and Co-optees in 2023-24 and a full training programme is now available for current and new Councillors, Scrutiny Members and Chairs, which will normally take place at the start of each new municipal year.

In conclusion, I would like to stress the importance of scrutiny being seen as a 'critical friend' and Scrutiny Committees and Panels being able to work with the Cabinet, whilst maintaining their independence; enabling scrutiny members to have the flexibility to be able to focus on and scrutinise areas which affect the people living in Kirklees.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Elizabeth Smaje".

Councillor Elizabeth Smaje

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee 2023/24

Committee Membership
Councillor Elizabeth Smaje (Chair)
Councillor Bill Armer
Councillor Andrew Cooper
Councillor Yusra Hussain (May to August 2023)
Councillor Jackie Ramsay (May to August 2023)
Councillor Moses Crook (September to November 2023)
Councillor Jo Lawson (September 2023 to March 2024)
Councillor Hannah McKerchar (March to April 2024)
Councillor Shabir Pandor (November 2023 to April 2024)

Work programme 2023/24

- Leader's and Corporate Portfolio's Priorities
- Financial Management of the Council
- Council Plan – Pre-Decision Scrutiny
- Crime and Disorder:
 - Communities Partnership Plan 2022-27
 - Annual Refresh of the Strategic Impact Assessment
 - Domestic Abuse Strategy
- Local Flood Risk Management:
 - Annual Review
 - Revised Local Flood Management Risk Strategy – Pre-Decision Scrutiny
- Corporate Performance and Impact – End of Year Report
- Kirklees Active Leisure and the Leisure Centre Review Programme
- Procurement
- West Yorkshire Joint Services
- Kirklees Armed Forces Covenant Progress Report
- Corporate Property Strategy
- Communications Strategy
- People Strategy
- Technology Strategy

In addition to the formal meetings of the Committee, informal sessions also took place to facilitate, amongst other things; pre-decision scrutiny and comment on the Council Plan; formulation of recommendations in relation to the Committee's work on the issue of social connectivity in Kirklees; and the introduction of the Council's Revised Integrated Impact Assessments Process.

The Chair of Scrutiny also received briefings during 2023/24, across a range of subjects and held regular meetings with the Cabinet Members for the Finance and Corporate Portfolios and relevant Strategic Director.

Committee Highlights

Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder Priorities 2023-24

The Leader of the Council attended the meeting of the Committee in October 2023 to set out her portfolio priorities.

The Leader explained that a new Council Plan was in development and would be finalised in early 2024 and detailed her four core priorities under the following headings:

- Address the financial position in a fair and balanced way.
- Strive to transform Council services to become more efficient, effective and modern.
- Continue to deliver a greener, healthier Kirklees and address the challenges of climate change.
- Continue to invest and regenerate our towns and villages to support our diverse places and communities to flourish.

The Leader responded to comments and questions from the Members of the Committee.

The Corporate Portfolio Holder attended the meeting in August 2023 and presented his priorities, under the following headings:

- Finance – The measures being taken to address the challenges facing the Council and to achieve financial stability, including plans to reduce the cost base and to increase income, but with the clear aim that the provision of the services and support that residents needed would continue.
- Cost of Living – In light of the continued pressures on local people, approaches would aim to address the short, medium and longer term, would be integral to the Council's work across all directorates and would work towards improved resilience within communities. There was also a continued commitment to support and develop the local economy and regeneration.
- Assets – A core portfolio of retained assets would be developed with an understanding of what was needed to facilitate the provision of services and good working conditions, within the existing financial constraints.

The Portfolio Holder responded to questions from Members of the Committee.

Financial Management

Throughout the year the Committee undertook scrutiny of the financial management of the Council at every meeting.

As a result of the change in structure of the standing Scrutiny Panels for 2024/24, the Committee assumed responsibility for the scrutiny of the financial management of the Council, and a relevant item was considered at every meeting throughout the year.

This included consideration of the quarterly Corporate Financial Management Reports, the Medium-Term Financial Strategy, the Annual Budget Report and a deeper focus on the following issues:

- The Council's arrangements and budgets for energy.
- The Council's Cost of Living Programme
- The Housing Revenue Account
- Capital and Borrowing

Outcomes

On all occasions, the Committee provided challenge to the Section 151 Officer and the relevant Cabinet Member, with questions and comments being put forward for their consideration in each case.

Kirklees Communities Partnership Plan 2022-2027 Refresh and Kirklees Strategic Intelligence Assessment

In March 2023, the Committee received a report which set out the high-level findings emerging from the annual refresh of Kirklees Strategic Intelligence Assessment and the suggested priorities for the Communities Partnership Plan refresh for 2024-25.

The report also highlighted the work that had taken place in 2023/2024, with a specific focus on serious violence, the Inclusive Communities Framework and drugs and alcohol.

The Committee heard that the Partnership Plan was overseen by the Communities Board. It was currently being reviewed for 2024/25 and any feedback from the Committee would be reported to the Communities Board in May when the priorities for 2024/25 would be formalised.

An overview was given in respect of the four strategic outcome themes contained within the plan and the approach taken by the Partnership. It was noted that the themes had been consistent for the last couple of years.

Partner representatives from West Yorkshire Police and West Yorkshire Fire Service contributed to the discussion.

Outcomes

The Committee:

- Endorsed the themes and priorities set out in the Communities Partnership Plan.
- Expressed concern that a lack of data/evidence in respect of non-injury road traffic accidents could impact on the ability to take action to reduce risk at locations of concern and noted that this data may be accessible from other sources, such as insurance companies.
- Welcomed the work by the Road Safety Partnership to build a wider package of data.
- Supported the efforts to increase awareness of 'Operation SNAP', as a positive initiative to assist in enforcement against driving offences.
- Requested that baseline data be collated in respect of tenancy outcomes, to assess if the introduction of the 'tenancy ready' training is effective and supports the roll-out of this training to all care leavers.

Local Flood Risk Management

In December 2023, the new Local Flood Risk Management Strategy 2024 was brought to the Committee, for pre-decision scrutiny, prior to its submission to the Cabinet for approval in early 2024.

The strategy set out how the Council would undertake its flood risk management responsibilities to meet the requirements of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010.

The Committee recommended that reference within the strategy to the work and engagement undertaken with, and alongside, other local authorities in respect of surface water should be strengthened.

Annual Review

In February 2024, a report was submitted which provided an annual review of activity in respect of local flood risk management.

Presentations were given in respect of:

- An ongoing Mental Health and Wellbeing Project. This pilot project had been developed in partnership with the West Yorkshire Flood Innovation Project (WY FLIP) and alongside the Yorkshire Integrated Catchment Solutions Programme (ICASP). WY FLIP was an innovative, collaborative approach, involving the five West Yorkshire local authorities, which had been developed to share ideas and experience and to identify innovative ways to secure investment into flood resilience. ICASP was a support service with links to local universities.
- The approach from the aspect of emergency planning, including the Kirklees Severe Weather Plan, which dictated how the Council responded to the impacts of a range of weather and how the plan could be activated at three levels, which could be triggered by warnings and alerts from partners.

Outcomes

The Committee:

- Welcomed the Mental Health and Wellbeing Project as an excellent initiative.
- Requested that efforts be made to raise awareness amongst all Councillors in respect of the benefits and possibilities of the use of property level protection against flooding.
- Recommended that engagement with Yorkshire Water be pursued at a regional level to examine the potential to reduce contamination spills from combined sewer overflows in severe weather; and
- Suggested that consideration be given to providing information, in the event of severe weather, to ensure that people who may be experiencing flooding for the first time were aware of who to contact for advice and assistance.

Kirklees Active Leisure

In August the Committee received a presentation in respect of Kirklees Active Leisure (KAL) which included:

- The background to the establishment of KAL (an independent not-for-profit charitable trust) in 2002, to manage leisure facilities throughout Kirklees.
- The partnership agreement with the Council, which had been extended for a period of twenty years in 2012.
- The current key challenges for the organisation and the measures taken, and being taken, to respond to the financial pressures.
- The Leisure Centre Review Programme, which was taking a strategic approach to the future offer and long-term operating model for the leisure centres.
- The range of potential options for the model of operation.
- Next steps and timeline.

In December 2023, a report was submitted which provided a briefing on the early analysis of the Leisure Centre Consultation. The Committee's views were also sought in respect of a report to Cabinet about the future offer for the leisure centres.

Outcomes

The Committee's response, which was reported to the meeting of Cabinet on 12th December 2023, included stressing the importance of:

- Ensuring sustainability for the future and building headroom into the budget to respond to future challenges, such as a rise in energy costs.
- The development of a forward plan for future capital investment across all sites.
- Systems to ensure oversight by the Council and early identification of any future funding issues.
- Developing and building upon the relationships and partnerships that have been established with community groups and other stakeholders in order to; maximise the possibilities for external funding opportunities and fundraising, and exploring all options in respect of the future model, including pricing structure.
- Effective communication with residents about the benefits of retaining the current partnership model and to ensure understanding of the issues and the implications of the proposals.
- Establishing a timetable for the establishment of the future model.
- The recognition that the facilities contribute to the health and wellbeing of the residents of Kirklees and have a positive impact in terms of social connectivity.

Acknowledgment of the significant response to the consultation and the work undertaken to analyse the responses and welcoming the proposed review to identify any lessons learned for future Council consultations.

Recognising the benefits of fundraising by community groups being directed towards supporting capital projects; and

Noting:

- That a future plan for physical activity across Dewsbury was to be developed and the feasibility of keeping dry-side facilities at Dewsbury Sports Centre will be explored, whilst balancing the sustainability of the whole of the model. It is recommended that timescales for this work should be put in place.
- That Deighton Sports Arena will remain open, and continue to be operated by KAL, in the short term so that options to maintain community access to the facility could be explored.
- That the position in respect of the revised treatment of VAT for leisure centres was to be explored.
- The re-modelling of finances undertaken by KAL to increase income.

Kirklees Armed Forces Covenant

The Committee received a report, in June 2023, which gave an update on the work of the Kirklees Armed Forces Covenant Board since the introduction of the Armed Forces Bill in 2021.

Outcomes

The Committee welcomed the work being undertaken with housing services, to help Armed Forces Personnel navigate the housing process, and the one-off budgetary provision that had been made for work on the Covenant. (This was an issue that the Committee had requested the Cabinet Member to consider, in December 2021, to support the work needed in response to forthcoming changes to legislation)

Members also suggested that a survey be developed to hear the voice and understand the needs of Armed Services personnel locally.

West Yorkshire Joint Services

The Director of West Yorkshire Joint Services (WYJS) attended the Committee and gave a presentation about the work of the organisation, with a particular focus on work within Kirklees. A briefing note had been included with the agenda for the meeting which explained that WYJS delivered a number of shared services, including a number of statutory services, on behalf of the five West Yorkshire Councils.

Outcomes

The Committee thanked the Director for attending the meeting to highlight the important work undertaken by West Yorkshire Joint Services in Kirklees.

Procurement

A report giving an update in respect of procurement was considered by the Committee in January 2024.

In November 2022, Cabinet had approved the new Procurement Strategy for Kirklees, which focused on five strategic themes;

- Delivering Social Value
- Promoting Inclusive Procurement
- Continuing to Develop the Category-Led Approach
- Striving for Innovation and Improvement in all Areas
- Good Governance

Since that point the team had focused upon delivery of the new strategy, alongside normal business activity, there had also been a focus on activity in anticipation of new procurement legislation.

Outcomes

The Committee requested another report be presented, further to the implementation of the Procurement Act 2023, to provide an update in respect of how the work was progressing and an assessment of its impact.

Corporate Property Strategy

The Committee received a report which provided a summary of the approach to property asset management, and the use of good practice in developing and bringing forward the Council's Corporate Property Strategy.

The aim of the strategy, which was at a formative stage, was to provide a fit-for-purpose, modern, effective and efficient estate to support and facilitate Council services; promote and enable the Council's corporate priorities; and link and collaborate with key strategic partners and local interest organisations and groups. The current approach followed good practice and the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) professional standard for strategic asset management of local authority assets.

Outcomes

It was requested that the strategy be brought back to the Committee for further consideration at an appropriate point.

Social Connectivity in Kirklees

The Committee continued with its work to examine the issue of social connectivity with the aim of helping to inform and shape the approach in responding to this issue, in light of the potential impact on the health and wellbeing of local people.

The Chair met with the Council's 'Our Voice' Team, to discuss the insights identified by their report 'Insights into Youth Loneliness Sept 22 – May 2023', further to work undertaken with students at Kirklees College and Huddersfield University. A meeting also took place with Yorkshire Children's Centre (now called Fresh Futures) to look at the research and engagement with young people undertaken as part of the creation of a new pilot service for young adults aged 18 – 26 and living in Kirklees.

Outcomes

The Committee produced a final report, including a number of recommendations which will be shared with the Cabinet Member. The report and the Cabinet Member's response will be formally submitted to the Committee in 2024/25.

Notice of Concern – proposals to increase car parking charges

A Notice of Concern was submitted by the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee to the 14 November 2023 Cabinet meeting in respect of proposals to increase car parking charges. The notice was submitted in accordance with Section 17 of Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules and set out a number of concerns in relation to budget assumptions; lack of financial detail; and the fact there was no accompanying economic impact assessment. The Monitoring Officer summarised the concerns that had been set out within the submitted Notice at the Cabinet meeting and the Cabinet Member for Culture and Greener Kirklees provided a verbal response to the Notice of Concern prior to Cabinet giving consideration to the report. The response did address some of the concerns set out in the Notice but not all elements were addressed, with some of the outstanding issues forming part of the subsequent call-in notice.

Looking forward to 2024/25

The Committee will maintain it's focus on the financial management of the Council and plans to look at the following issues:

- The Council Plan
- Pre-decision scrutiny of the revised Inclusion and Diversity Strategy
- The Kirklees Communities Partnership Plan
- Procurement
- Final report on Social Connectivity
- Pre-decision scrutiny of the refresh of a number of Council strategies

Comments

Councillor Elizabeth Smaje, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, expressed her thanks to all Members of the Committee, the many officers who had presented reports and kept Members updated on relevant issues, and all those who had participated to assist the Committee in its work throughout the year.

Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel 2023/24

Committee Membership
Councillor Bill Armer (Lead Member)
Councillor Jo Lawson
Councillor Alison Munro
Councillor Beverley Addy
Councillor Itrat Ali
Councillor Habiban Zaman
Helen Clay (Co-optee)
Kim Taylor (Co-optee)

Work programme 2023/24

- Resources of the Kirklees Health and Adult Social Care Economy
- Capacity and Demand - Kirklees Health and Adult Social Care System
- Joined up Care in Kirklees Neighbourhoods
- Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Managing Capacity and Demand
- Maternity Services
- Access to dentistry
- Kirklees Safeguarding Adults Board (KSAB) 2021/22 Annual Report
- Adults Social Care/CQC Inspection
- Consultation on the closure of Claremont House and Castle Grange
- Joined up hospital services in Kirklees
- External Consultancy
- Carephone Restructure
- Non-Surgical Oncology

Panel highlights

Maternity Services in Kirklees

In the Panel's meeting held in November 2023 representatives from Calderdale and Huddersfield NHS Foundation Trust (CHFT) and Mid Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust (MYHT) attended the meeting to present an update on the provision of maternity services in Kirklees.

Areas that were discussed included: maternity services workforce; work being done to reintroduce birthing centres in Kirklees; the timeline for reopening services and proposed model for Kirklees; and next steps in the approach to communicating and publicising.

In relation to the reopening of the Huddersfield Birth Centre, the Panel heard that staffing deficits were forecast into the New Year with recruitment campaigns not securing enough experienced midwives for the free-standing birth centre. A re-evaluation would take place in Quarter 1 2024/25 once new graduates were in post to assess if the staffing position had changed to enable a responsive model utilising community Midwifery.

Regarding Dewsbury And District Hospital Bronte Birth Centre, a new full time experienced Birth Centre Manager had been recruited, and assuming newly qualified midwives completed supernumerary periods as expected, the plan was to reopen before 1 April 2024.

As part of their continuing review into maternity services in Kirklees, panel members visited Pinderfields Birthing Centre on 16 October 2023 to have a tour of the Birthing Unit and Labour Ward.



Visit to Pinderfields Birthing Centre and Labour Ward on 16th October 2023

Outcomes

As a result of the discussion, the Panel believed the model proposed by Calderdale and Huddersfield NHS Foundation Trust (CHFT) and Mid Yorkshire NHS Teaching Trust (MYTT) to the midwife led birthing units would be a substantial change of provision and that further in-depth scrutiny take pace to consider the protracted closure of the midwife led birthing units, the timeline for reopening and the proposed model in relation to any future sustainability. Officers of the Council were instructed to liaise with Calderdale Council and Wakefield Council on the impact that the continued closures and proposed.

Consultation on the closure of Claremont House and Castle Grange

The Panel included in its work programme a focus on the proposed closures of Claremont House and Castle Grange Care Homes.

The Panel was advised that both care homes were owned and run by the Council for people over the age of fifty-five with a Dementia diagnosis and each had 30 long and short stay beds. It was noted that Castle Grange was temporarily accommodating a Dementia Day care service. The Panel was reminded that the Cabinet proposals asked for approval, subject to stakeholder consultation, for the Council to withdraw from the long stay residential care market and to focus direct care delivery in parts of the care market where there were fewer providers and options for people.

A consultation was launched on 11th October 2023 until 3rd January 2024 where engagement with family members and other stakeholders continued for the duration of the consultation, with ongoing focussed meetings driven by the consultation needs of the families.

Outcomes

A number of concerns highlighted by the Panel were addressed that included the effect of moving patients with dementia on their long-term health and longevity, and capacity in local care homes for current residents. The Panel requested that further information around the financial implications of the closure of care homes be provided.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

In the Panel's meeting held in August 2023, Older people's inpatient mental health services transformation programme was considered, that included older people's mental health inpatient wards, improvements to older people's mental health in the community, and why proposals were being considered to transform older people's inpatient mental health services in Calderdale, Kirklees and Wakefield.

The Panel was advised that where a substantial development or variation affected more than one local authority area, then those local authorities were required to establish a joint overview and scrutiny committee.

Outcomes

The Panel felt that the formal proposals that were being developed to change inpatient mental health services for older people were likely to constitute a substantial development or variation in health services and authorised officers to start making the necessary arrangements required to support the next phase of scrutiny activity.

Looking forward to 2024/25

The Panel will scrutinise the following key areas -

- Resources of the Kirklees Health and Adult Social Care Economy
- Capacity and Demand - Kirklees Health and Adult Social Care System
- Communities Accessing Care
- Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JHOSC) Updates
- Care Quality Commission (CQC)
- Kirklees Safeguarding Adults Board (KSAB) and the Care Quality Commission (CQC)
- Adult Social Care/CQC Inspection
- Joined up hospital services in Kirklees
- Dentistry

Comments

Kim Taylor – Scrutiny Co-optee

Working as a voluntary co - optee on the Adult Health and Social Care scrutiny panel has given me the opportunity to be part of the panel's decision-making process and to use my experience of working in the NHS to influence and constructively challenge the way that services in Kirklees are delivered.

As a lay member of the scrutiny panel, I am always mindful to consider the effect of any proposed changes or concerns about the quality of services delivered by the council and its partner organisations, and what these would mean to me, my family and friends, and the wider community. I particularly enjoy the panel discussions on unplanned care and it was interesting to be part of the discussion about the work being done in the community to reduce unnecessary admissions to hospital.

There is always a full agenda at panel meetings and given the many national challenges in Adult Health and Social Care, it sometimes feels that we are only scratching the surface and that there are very limited solutions to the issues that are debated. That said I always find the panel meetings productive and informative. The other panel members are always welcoming and supportive and as Principal Governance Officer, Nicola, provides plenty of background information before the panel and is always happy to answer any queries.

As my time on the panel has progressed, I feel more confident to ask questions during the panel meetings and understand that there is no such thing as a silly question!

I have thoroughly enjoyed being a co-optee and feel privileged to be part of the council's decision-making process in this important area of work.

Comments

Councillor Bill Armer – Lead Member

I have had an interesting year leading the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel, and have been ably supported by my colleagues on the Panel and by two Kirklees officers, originally Yolande Myers and more recently Nicola Sylvester. This panel is quite unique, in that most of the services it scrutinises are provided by the NHS or, in the case of Adult Social Care, largely by the private sector. The Council only has direct control of two care homes, of which more below.

There have been frustrations during the year, notably around the difficulties faced by both the NHS Trusts involved (Mid-Yorkshire and Calderdale and Huddersfield) in forecasting future staffing levels for the two midwife-led birthing centres (Dewsbury and Huddersfield) in Kirklees. It had been the case that, apart from home deliveries, there was no opportunity for children to be born within Kirklees for a number of years. Despite the ensuing uncertainties in both the dates when services could be recommenced, it appeared to the Panel that both Trusts were proposing significant changes to their birthing provisions. Officers were requested to make further enquiries of colleagues in both Wakefield and Halifax, and this work is ongoing.

There was a great deal of concern raised by relatives of residents of the two Kirklees Council-owned residential care homes, at Claremont House and Castle Grange, following proposals to close these facilities, and the Panel took an interest in these cases. Relatives of residents of both homes were invited to give evidence to the Panel. Concerns were raised about the effects on future health of moving such patients, and the Panel requested that active consideration be given to transferring ownership of the premises as going concerns, or otherwise to avoid closure. Ultimately, Cabinet decided on a refreshed approach to the issue.

The NHS Trusts covering Kirklees, and further afield, had been considering their future offer for inpatient options in the area of the mental health of older people. These considerations were reported to the Panel, and it was considered that they amounted to a substantial development. Acting on advice, the Panel requested officers to liaise with their colleagues in Wakefield and Calderdale in order to take the necessary steps to arrange a tripartite Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee to fully consider these proposals.

A major source of frustration for me, and for the Panel, has been the apparent shortcomings in NHS dentistry provisions in Kirklees, and perhaps particularly in the north of the Borough. It was noted that there were inequalities in levels of provision, but it did not prove to be possible to receive a report as to any underlying reasons for this. In this, it did seem that the local situation reflected national problems in this service area.

Overall, a busy and productive year for this Panel.

Growth and Regeneration Panel 2023/24

Committee Membership
Councillor Yusra Hussain (Lead Member June 2023 - August 2023)
Councillor Moses Crook (Lead Member September 2023 - October 2023)
Councillor Shabir Pandor (Lead Member November 2023 - March 2024)
Councillor John Taylor
Councillor Zarina Amin
Councillor Manisha Kaushik
Councillor Harry McCarthy
Councillor Tyler Hawkins
Councillor Susan Lee-Richards
Chris Friend (Co-optee)
Jonathan Milner (Co-optee)

Work Programme 2023/24

- Introduction to Growth & Regeneration
- Housing Growth
- Small Centres Programme
- Damp Mould and Condensation
- Tenant Safety
- Local Plan Review
- Economic Strategy Refresh
- Skills (post 16)
- Interim Housing Position Statement for Boosting Supply
- Cultural Heart updates
- Corporate Risk
- Transport Strategy
- Transport Programme
- Complaints Handling (Council Housing Tenants/Private Sector)
- Building Safety & Compliance Combined Action Plan

The Growth and Regeneration Scrutiny Panel was newly established in the 2023/24 municipal year, and at the work programme development workshop, in June 2023, it became apparent that it would be a busy work programme and additional meetings would be required to deal with the scope of the panel's work.

Panel highlights

Small Centres Programme

At the panel meeting on the 3rd July 2023, the Panel received a report on the four towns, in the Small Centres Programme namely, Batley, Cleckheaton, Heckmondwike and Holmfirth. The Panel learned that the programme is the council's attempt to strengthen local centres, recognising these are important places for people to live, work and do business. It is an important program that is being expanded to include a fifth centre in Marsden. The Panel was given a breakdown on the progress being made in each of the centres and informed that there has been a lot of work undertaken, and some centres were more advanced than others and some had been more challenging. Progress was being made and a number of these town centre schemes had secured funding which had been welcomed.

Outcomes

The Panel felt that it was positive that Kirklees was able to continue to invest in the towns, as local residents need this kind of aspirational project and the jobs and economic development that it would result in, and was positive and very much needed. The Panel agreed to continue to receive updates as the Small Centres Programme progressed.

Damp, Mould and Condensation

At the panel meeting, on the 14th August 2023, the Panel considered a report on the current situation with regard to damp, mould and condensation in Council Homes. The Panel was advised that this is a major issue being faced both locally and nationally, and the report being presented to the Panel aimed to show the response to tackling cases in Kirklees. It was explained that the government had put a lot of attention on this issue, and at that point in Kirklees, there were eight hundred open cases of damp, mould, and condensation and there had been a growing number of cases being reported into the service. The Panel was informed that in response to addressing the issue, a task and finish group was formed with officers from across the council. The aim was to deliver changes to the short-term approach to damp, mould, and condensation, with a focus on dealing with, and resolving the current caseload. All the work that had been carried out to date had been around dealing with the existing caseload, putting in place, systems and processes, and gathering information and intelligence to use to better understand how to deliver and target services in the future.

In addition, the Panel learned that a dedicated IT system was being developed, where all relevant information about damp, mould and condensation was brought together in one place. There was also a dedicated Single Point of Contact (SPoC) made up of officers, who deal with all incoming calls about damp, mould and condensation, and information held in the system was being used to triage and categorise cases. All officers in Homes and Neighbourhoods and Kirklees Direct had access to this system and had received guidance on how to use it.

The Panel was informed that an additional piece of work, that had been running in parallel, was redesigning the whole of the system for delivering and responding to damp and mould, and the current piece of work around dealing with the backlog was still ongoing.

Outcome

The Panel welcomed the update and asked that the guidance and training materials provided to staff to help them triage, and effectively deal with calls, be shared with the staff within the MP's offices as they were often the first contact.

Economic Strategy Refresh

At the panel meeting on the 10th October 2023, the Panel received a report which outlined the refresh on the Inclusive Economy Strategy. The Panel was informed that it was recognised that the Economic Strategy needed revisiting, and rather than a wholesale rewrite, the strategy would be refreshed. The Panel heard that many of the principles and aims of the strategy is based on an inclusive economy and attracting inward investment to create a strong vibrant local economy. Since the strategy was created, there have been changes both nationally and internationally, and therefore a refresh was necessary.

The Panel was informed that macroeconomic factors of Covid, the cost of living crisis, the impact of the war in Ukraine, energy prices and inflation had a greater impact on the Kirklees economy than factors that could be controlled locally. Whilst it is not possible to control the economy, the aim is to influence the local economy while being cognisant of the bigger economic factors, while accentuating the positive opportunities, by influencing and being aware of macroeconomic factors using proactive resources with partners.

The Panel was further informed that in refreshing the strategy, the aim is to reach multiple audiences, is concise, speaks to its democratic accountability and political leadership and is readable. It is important that the strategy is not just a Council document, but is owned by a wider set of stakeholders and anchor institutions such as the college or the university. The strategy should be reflective of Kirklees, translating West Yorkshire Combined Authority, and Mayoral priorities down to a local level is also important.

Outcomes

The Panel supported the overall strategy, and noted the continuing impact of Covid and the cost of living crisis, and the corresponding mitigations for this within the strategy. The Panel also noted the persistent economic lag for the lowest decile in comparison to overall growth, and observed the persistence of deprivation and the aim of the strategy to combat this.

Looking forward to 2024/25

The Panel met in July 2024, to agree its work programme priorities for the year ahead. The Panel agreed that the areas of focus will include, Preventing Homelessness & Rough Sleeper Strategy, Damp Mould and Condensation Policy and site visits as part of the Cultural Heart and wider Blueprint.

Comments

Cllr Zarina Amin, Panel Member

As a Panel member for the Growth and Regeneration Scrutiny Panel, the Panel were able to scrutinise a number of key and important issues such as the Damp, Mould and Condensation following the issue being highlighted nationally. It is vitally important that the Panel continues to focus on this issue to ensure that Kirklees Council fulfils its obligations to tenants and residents of Kirklees.

Chris Friend Voluntary Co-Optee

There have been a wide range of topics discussed in the Growth and Regeneration Panel meetings this year. Many have been forward looking topics covering Housing Growth, Small Centres, Cultural Heart, Transport Programme and have been very interesting to a Co-optee like myself. In addition, there have been a number of more challenging topics such as the issue of Damp and Mould which is regularly discussed.

The appropriate Council Officers have attended all meetings as needed and have always proven very knowledgeable on the key subjects and have provided clear rationales for many decisions and initiatives. One area that I have found invaluable is the provision of follow up material; on occasion, certain information has not been to hand at the Panel meeting, but this has been provided promptly post-meeting by the Scrutiny support team. The Panel members have generally asked very tough and challenging questions on the topics being discussed but in a non-confrontational way, exactly what you would expect of a Scrutiny Panel.

Children's Scrutiny Panel

2023/24

Committee Membership
Councillor Andrew Cooper (Lead Member)
Councillor Richard Smith
Councillor Paul Moore
Councillor John Lawson
Councillor Eric Firth
Oliver Gibson (Co-optee)

Work Programme 2023/24

- Review of the Improvement Journey – Inspection of Local Authorities Children’s Services (ILACs)
- Review of Children’s Residential Homes and functions
- Quality Assurance – impact of auditing the Children’s Service
- Educational and learning Outcomes - Our Kirklees Futures Learning Strategy
- Sufficiency for Children’s Service (places/staffing resources)
- Potential changes to Young People’s Activity Team (YPAT) provision
- Partnership Arrangements
- Voice of the Young Person
- Special Educational Needs and High Needs (SEND) and Post 16 Home to School Transport
- Special Guardianship Orders (SGO’s)
- Mental Health in Schools - Provision of service & Waiting lists
- Emotional Wellbeing Provision in Kirklees
- Transition of young people to adults
- Emerging Risks
- Performance Information (Children’s Service)

Panel Highlights

2022-23 Kirklees Annual Education Quality and Standards

In September 2023, the Panel received for information an overview of the statutory outcomes achieved by learners in Kirklees during the academic year 2022-2023. The report covered outcomes at the end of the Foundation Stage, Phonics (Year 1), Key Stage 1 (Year 2), Key Stage 2 (Year 6), Key Stage 4 (GCSE) and Key Stage 5. The early Kirklees Annual Educational Quality and Standards Report 2022-23 was presented to establish a shared understanding about the performance of our children and young people in terms of Educational Outcomes across the district, so that the partnership could identify where to prioritise collective efforts for improvement.

Quality Assurance

In December 2023, the Panel considered a briefing note giving an overview of the main areas of learning and development that had arisen from learning conversations and Practice Learning Days.

Outcomes

The Panel agreed to consider a future update report once the process had embedded.

Working Together to Safeguard Children

In January 2024, the Panel considered a report on Working Together to Safeguard Children explaining that in December 2023, the Department for Education published new statutory guidance on multi-agency working to help, protect and promote the welfare of children and the report will give a summary of the changes made.

The Panel asked questions relating to the following areas –

- Was the new guidance being implemented by all Local Authorities and Practitioners in the country?
- How could the Panel be kept informed of the key elements of the changes and new arrangements, in particular, in relation to implementation and good practice?

Outcomes

The Panel agreed to invite the Independent Scrutineer to a future meeting during the 2024-25 municipal year to discuss and reflect on the new arrangements and changes and how the service had acted as a safeguarding multi-agency partnership. The Panel also agreed to receive a copy of the latest Annual Report currently produced by Kirklees Safeguarding Partnership Board, so that they could see the work that was being undertaken.

The Panel agreed to attend appropriate meetings and events to observe the key elements of the changes and new arrangements on working together to safeguard children, with a particular focus on the implementation of the new service and good practice.

Post 16 Home to School Travel

In September and December 2023, the Panel received updates, as part of -pre-decision scrutiny, on the Consultation process for the Post 16 Home to School Transport and Travel, explaining that the consultation of the draft post 16 Transport statement would run until 31 December 2023. Following the consultation, the responses would be taken into account on the final Statement and a decision made by Cabinet in March 2024.

Outcomes

The Panel agreed to consider an update on the consultation for the Post 16 Home to School Travel in January 2024 as part of pre-decision scrutiny.

Post 16 Transport Statement 2024/25

In March 2024, the Panel considered a report giving an update on the proposed changes to Kirklees Council's Post 16 Transport Statement for 2024/25.

The Home to School Transport Team ensured compliance with statutory duties under the Education Act 1996 and statutory guidance, arranging home to school transport for all eligible children, in the main for students between the ages of 16 and 19.

The Service was seeing significant year on year cost increases due an increase in demand and the number of Educational Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), the number of routes increasing (especially single taxi routes), increasing costs from suppliers, supply and demand issues and cost of living/operating costs rising.

The proposed changes to Post 16 Passenger Travel included a move to policy where a personal travel payment was the default, moving away from physical transport except where Special Educational Need necessitated Council arranged transport.

The Panel asked questions on the following themes –

- Was the system working well in other Local Authorities?
- How would vulnerable children and young people be safeguarded if parents were to change their child's mode of transport and look for more financially viable options?
- Would parents be exposed to price hikes, for example, fuel increases?
- How would the in-house fleet operate, what was the cost benefit of the proposal and how would the vehicles be utilised out of school time and what income might be raised?
- What were the low carbon vehicle alternatives and would vehicles be to a Euro 6 standard?

Outcomes

The Panel noted that the report would be considered at Cabinet on the 9th April 2024. Cabinet approved that the Post 16 Transport Statement be adopted and would take effect from 31st May 2024 and be applied to existing and new students at the start of the 2024 academic year.

Partnership arrangements and visits by the Panel

The Panel visited both internal teams and external partners during the 2023/24 municipal year. The following information gives a summary on some of the visits that took place during the year -

Our Kirklees Futures Learning Summit and Joint Headteacher Session on 27th June 2023

Members of the Panel attended the "Our Kirklees Futures Learning Summit" on the 27th June 2023. The event centred around the theme of transition in a child's school journey. It looked at the critical challenges and opportunities that students faced during their educational transitions. Coming together as a system provided an invaluable platform for education professionals to exchange ideas, share best practices, and explore innovative approaches to supporting students through these significant milestones.

The workshop sessions allowed attendees to delve into areas such as seamless transitions between schools, effective collaboration between educational institutions, emotional well-being during transition periods, and the role of parents in supporting their child's educational journey.



Visit to the Our Kirklees Futures Learning Summit and Joint Headteacher Session on 27th June 2023

Visit to Education and Learning Partnership Board (ELPB) on 27th September 2023

The Chair of the Panel attended the Education Learning and Partnership Board (ELPB) on the 27th September 2023 as part of the Panel's focus on exclusions and suspensions in Kirklees' schools.

The following key areas were considered –

- Exclusions and suspensions, including data taken from 2022/23; and
- Support approach in place, including new DfE guidance published in May 2022.

Visit to Early Years Conference on 12th October 2023

The Panel attended the Professional Development Conference for early years' partners on the 12th October 2023 to see some of the work being undertaken with the wider schools system to secure positive outcomes for Kirklees Children and Young People. Work force development and prioritising the early years were two clear areas showcased at the event.

Looking forward to 2024/25

The Panel will scrutinise the following key areas –

- Educational Outcomes
- Children's Scrutiny Ofsted Inspection – outcomes and recommendations
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Transformation Plan and Sufficiency of SEND and mainstream capacity
- Quality Assurance – impact of auditing the Children's Service
- Health provision for Children and Young People and Emotional Wellbeing Provision for children in Kirklees and Mental Health in Schools
- Review of the Provision of Short Breaks and Respite Care for Parents and Carers
- Review of Children's Residential Homes and Foster Care Placements

Comments

Councillor Andrew Cooper – Lead Member

Many thanks to officers and my fellow panel members for their support throughout my year as Chair of Children's Scrutiny.

What has impressed me is the strong grasp on performance demonstrated by officers, When probed it was clear that their understanding and interpretation of the data they were presenting was very apparent. This boded well for the OFSTED inspection which finally happened after my tenure as Chair of the Panel.

I very much enjoyed being a fly on the wall at training events and sitting in briefings for staff. The professionalism and commitment to getting better outcomes for Kirklees children was very clear from what I witnessed.

Two areas in particular that we scrutinised were SEND provision and Home to School Transport. These are recognised nationally as areas where councils have huge cost pressures and where demand for provision far outstrips supply. There needs to be an ongoing engagement with users of these services to get their perspective on how the Council is doing and how easy it is, or is not, to engage with Kirklees.

Thanks again for all the help I've received and the insight it has provided me, and other panel members, into the work of the Council.

Environment and Climate change Panel 2023/24

Committee Membership
Councillor Hannah McKerchar (Lead Member)
Councillor John Taylor
Councillor Matthew McLoughlin
Councillor Will Simpson
Councillor Tim Bamford
Jane Emery (Co-optee)
Garry Kitchen (Co-optee)

Work Programme 2023/24

During the 2023/24 municipal year the Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Panel focused on climate impact and delivery of net zero targets as the key areas of consideration 'golden threads' when scrutinizing the following issues:

- Cumulative Impact Assessment
- White Rose Forest – Summary Review 2022/23
- Waste Strategy Update
- Snow Warden Volunteer Scheme Update
- Council Owned Tree and Woodland Management Policy
- Air Quality Update
- Call in of Cabinet Decision in relation to the Revision of Car Parking Tariffs/Charges
- 2 Year Highways Capital Plan Update
- Highways and Road Safety
- Environmental Sustainability Strategy
- Waste Disposal Contract Procurement

Panel Highlights

Snow Wardens Volunteer Scheme

At the meeting held on 30th August 2024, the Panel considered a report on the Snow Wardens Volunteer Scheme as part of the Panel's continuous review of winter maintenance.

The Panel were informed that the scheme enabled the Council to equip residents with grit, equipment and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) which would allow them to clear snow from residential areas that gritters would not cover. The Scheme was flexible allowing residents to decide how much time they would like to dedicate to the scheme, and to choose their own hours and locations of work.

Outcomes

The Panel welcomed the scheme as well as noting the ambition to engage more community groups and Parish Councils in the scheme as it expanded.

To help achieve the ambition, a key discussion was held around the issue of communications and the Panel highlighted the importance of taking a consistent approach to raising awareness of the scheme across the Council, including through the provision of social media guidance.

The Panel also suggested the use of handouts (for elected members) to share with residents and help to promote the scheme within communities, as well as encouraging the exploration of ways to promote the scheme in rural areas through community events such as agricultural shows.

Energy from Waste Facility and Materials Recycling Facility Scrutiny Visit

Arising from the Panel's scrutiny of the Re-Profile of Kirklees Resource and Waste Strategy 2021-2030, Panel members were invited to visit the Energy from Waste Facility and Materials Recycling Facility in Huddersfield.

The visit took place on 27th September 2023, where Panel members undertook a tour of the waste and recycling facility located on Diamond Street in Huddersfield.

Outcomes

During the tour, Panel members were shown how recyclable material was processed, separated, and baled ready for re-use, and how non-recyclable material was put to good use as an alternative to fossil fuels creating enough electricity to power over 15,000 homes. The Panel also noted the risks that disposable vapes posed to the recycling centre and felt that messaging to raise awareness amongst communities was important.



Visit to Waste Facility and Materials Recycling Facility on 27th September 2023

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 the 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 the 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 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
- 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:

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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 Local Base Unclassified Roads (LBUR) programme, and the continuing maintenance of the Public Rights of Way (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.

Environment Strategy: Everyday Life

At the meeting held on 21st February 2024, the Panel considered the Environment Strategy: Everyday Life prior to the strategy progressing to Cabinet for approval.

The Panel were informed that the Environment Strategy aimed to address the climate emergency whilst also tackling the ecological emergency and broader social /economic challenges. It was a high-level framework which aimed to achieve a more environmentally sustainable future and had co-designed with key stakeholders including 1039 residents and 549 representatives of partner organisations, businesses, institutions and community groups.

Outcomes

In the discussion to follow the Panel raised a number of questions and considerations including the delivery of targets, how success would be measured, the use of language and accessibility and elected member engagement. It was recommended that:

- It be made clear in the strategy that the projected cost of transition was a combination of public and private investment.
- The reference to high inflation rates be revisited prior to Cabinet to ensure current information was included at the time of consideration.
- It be referenced in the Strategy that reliance on fossil fuels increased vulnerability to national inflation pressures.
- Elected members continued to be engaged in the delivery of the strategy.
- The language used in relation to actions and targets be reassessed to ensure the information was accessible as a public facing document.
- A glossary setting out definitions of key terms and acronyms be included at the close of the strategy to increase accessibility.
- The Panel's comments in relation to revisiting targets including
 1. Clarity of language
 2. Influence and impact of individual behaviour change and
 3. Scope for delivery be reflected upon and reshared with the Panel as an additional stage in the flightpath.
- Regular updates on progress be provided to the Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Panel during delivery of the strategy.

Waste Disposal Contract Procurement

At the meeting held on 27th March 2024, the Panel considered a report on the Waste Disposal Contract Procurement.

The Panel were informed that it was proposed that the interim arrangements for the waste Private Financial Initiative (PFI) contract be extended for a further three years with a revised expiry date of March 2028 (the maximum extension allowed) to allow more time for statutory service changes to be brought in at a national level and prepare for the procurement of a new contract that was in line with these changes. It also allowed time to benefit from the current cost-effective interim contract.

Outcomes

In the discussion to follow the Panel raised several key points including the potential introduction of food waste collection and kerbside collection for tetra packs/glass (referencing the recent glass collection trail) and were advised of the key benefits and risks in doing so. The Panel also asked questions around savings proposals, the future proofing of the Energy from Waste Facility, the disposal of persistent organic pollutants (POPs) and the interdependencies between the waste contract and the Heat District Energy Network (HDEN)

The Panel also highlighted that:

- The recent operational issues of the day-to-day waste collection service and
- The regular occurrence of containers being too full to use at the Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC's) despite complaints being raised were key areas of concern.

It was recommended that:

- The Panel's feedback with regards to tetra pack recycling and occurrences of the receptacles being too full regularly be communicated to the HWRC's.
- More workshops in relation to the action taken to address missed waste collection services be offered to all elected members as a priority.
- An update on waste collection services be provided to the Panel.
- An update on following the development of the full business case for the HDEN be considered for the scrutiny 2024/24 work programme.

Looking forward to 2024/25

Looking forwards to 2024/25 the Panel plan to give consideration to the following themes and issues:-

- Waste Collection Performance
- Waste Procurement
- Fly tipping
- Road Safety
- 2 Year Highways Capital Plan
- Public Space Protection Orders
- Events
- Kirklees Internal Carbon Reporting
- The Lane Rental Scheme
- The Kirklees Statement of Licensing Policy
- The Parks and Greenspace Vision
- Huddersfield Heat Network : the development of the full business case
- Fleet Replacement Programme and O Licence compliance
- Air Quality

Comments

Councillor Hannah McKerchar - Lead Member

I would like to thank everyone on the Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Panel, elected members and our dedicated co-optee, including the other Councillors who held the position of Chair of the panel during the municipal year, for their commitment to the work of the Panel. They have all made contributions to effective scrutiny through their thoughtful and thorough consideration of the complex and important issues put before them. Key priorities of the Panel in the 2023/24 year included examination of the overarching Environmental Sustainability Strategy for Kirklees, while maintaining a continued focus on environmental matters at all levels of policy and implementation in relation to the climate emergency, as well as giving scrutiny to the Waste Disposal Contract Procurement process which will have significant impact going forward.

We were asked to consider the grounds for a call-in request regarding the Cabinet decision relating to the Revision of Car Parking Tariffs/Charges, which procedure only emphasised the importance of pre-decision scrutiny to the effective implementation of a robust and constructive scrutiny process.

During a busy work programme for the Panel, we also considered matters relating to interesting topics as varied as the Snow Warden programme and the Tree and Woodland Management Policy. Throughout the 2023/24 year, all members continued to further the aims of the Panel to drive improvement through strong and robust scrutiny.

Calderdale and Kirklees Joint Health Scrutiny Committee 2023/24

Committee Membership
Councillor Elizabeth Smaje (Joint Chair)
Councillor Alison Munro
Councillor Andrew Cooper
Councillor Beverley Addy

During the 2023/24 municipal year, the committee continued its focus on the reconfiguration of services at Calderdale and Huddersfield NHS Foundation Trust (CHFT). The Committee held three formal meetings in November 2023, March, and June 2024.

The Committee was delighted to attend an open day at the new Accident and Emergency Department at Huddersfield Royal Infirmary in September 2023. Whilst the opening was delayed due to a technical issue, the new state-of-the-art department opened in May 2024.



Visit to Open Day at the new Accident and Emergency Department at Huddersfield Royal Infirmary in September 2023

At its meeting in November 2023, the Committee received information regarding CHFT's reconfiguration at Calderdale Royal Hospital (CRH) which included establishing ten new wards, a new A&E department, a new paediatric emergency department and re-locating the learning and development centre, as well as the construction of a multi-storey carpark.

The meetings in March and June discussed Maternity Services, along with the proposed re-opening of the Bronte Birthing Unit at Dewsbury District Hospital. The re-opening of the birthing unit at Huddersfield Royal Infirmary will be considered during the 2024/25 municipal year.

West Yorkshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2023/24

Committee Membership
Councillor Elizabeth Smaje (Joint Chair)
Councillor Beverley Addy

The JHOSC met three times during 2023/24 and covered a variety of issues that had implications for the West Yorkshire region.

Issues covered included: consideration of an Urgent Care Service Review, Dentistry and Oral Health, Winter Planning, Harmonisation of Commissioning Policies across the West Yorkshire footprint, proposed changes to Non-Surgical Oncology, Health Inequalities and Prevention along with Workforce Priorities.

Older People's Mental Health Services Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2023/24

Committee Membership
Councillor Elizabeth Smaje
Councillor John Lawson
Councillor Andrew Cooper
Councillor Shabir Pandor

The JHOSC was established to consider proposals from South West Yorkshire Partnership Foundation Trust (SWYPFT) and NHS West Yorkshire Integrated Care Board to improve mental health care for older people and address the challenges of mixed patients wards (organic needs and functional needs).

At its first meeting in November 2023, the Committee was presented with information in relation to the transformation business case, options development and consultation plan.

A further meeting was held in February 2024 ('mid-point review') which helped the Committee understand how the consultation phase was progressing and to identify any gaps in the scope of the consultation i.e. areas of under representation.

The final consultation findings will be considered during the 2024/25 municipal year.

West Yorkshire Combined Authority Scrutiny 2023/24

Proposals on a review of the structure of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) scrutiny function were considered by the Combined Authority on the 14th March (arising from the publication by government in November 2023 of a new Scrutiny Protocol setting out best practice for accountability and scrutiny within mayoral combined authorities, and subsequent review) and consequently WYCA agreed to adopt a single committee model as opposed to the 3 committees which were in place.

An Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) was convened to assess member allowances according to the revised committee structure and new role profiles, which sought to enshrine the principle that most overview and scrutiny work takes place outside of formal committee meetings. The IRP increased allowance levels to take these new duties into account, which were approved at the Combined Authority annual meeting on the 20th June alongside the formal appointment of a single committee of 15 members from the constituent councils, together with 1 member from the non-constituent council of York, with each member having a Deputy Member (formerly substitutes).

The Combined Authority also appointed Cllr Barry Anderson (Leeds, Conservative) as Chair of the Scrutiny Committee, with the Committee having authority to appoint up to 2 Vice-Chairs. The terms of reference and Scrutiny Standing Orders have also been reviewed and updated to reflect the single-committee structure and proposed new ways of working .

The WYCA Scrutiny Annual Report for 2023/24 will likely be considered by the WYCA Scrutiny Committee for approval on the 20th September 2024 and will be published.

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