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KIRKLEES COUNCIL

GROWTH AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY PANEL

Monday 9th December 2024

Present: Councillor Zarina Amin (Chair)
Councillor Alison Munro
Councillor Harry McCarthy

Co-optees Jonathan Milner

In attendance: Cllr Grahm Turner, Cabinet member for Finance and
Regeneration
Edward Highfield, Service Director, Skills and
Regeneration
Jonathan Nunn, Policy and Partnership Officer
Chris Duffill, Head of Business and Skills

Apologies: Councillor Bill Armer
Councillor Aziz Daji
Chris Friend (Co-Optee)

1 Membership of the Panel

Apologies were received from Cllr Bill Armer, Cllr Aziz Daji and Chris Friend.

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on the 4 November 2024, were approved as a correct record.

3 Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

4 Admission of the Public

All agenda items were considered in public session.

5 Deputations/Petitions

No deputations or petitions were received.

6 Public Question Time

In accordance with Council Procedure rule 11, Mr Andrew Wilson attended the meeting and asked a number of questions. Responses to the questions were provided by the Service Director for Skills and Regeneration.

7 **Kirklees Inclusive Economy Strategy - draft for consultation**

The Panel was presented with information which outlined the Kirklees Inclusive Economic Strategy draft for consultation. Cllr Graham Turner, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Regeneration, introduced the item advising the Panel that initially when work was being undertaken to review the strategy, it was decided that the vast majority of it was still relevant, therefore, it would be refreshed to bring it up to date. The basic fundamentals of wanting strong economic growth, creating well paid jobs and to drive the local economy are still there, therefore it is a refresh rather than a total redraft of the strategy.

Edward Highfield, Service Director for Skills and Regeneration, informed the Panel that the current economic plan expires in 2025, and therefore it is timely to refresh the strategy, and it will sit alongside the other top tier strategies. As a result of being considered a top tier strategy, once finalised, the draft will need to progress to Cabinet for endorsement and finally to Full Council, and the view of Scrutiny is part of the development process. Comments from the Panel and other comments received through other partnership forums will all be taken on board in a final draft that will go to Cabinet in the new year.

The aim of this is inclusive growth, a more inclusive form of growth in Kirklees to ensure that everybody in society is able to participate and benefit from the proceeds of a growing economy. It is both a growth plan and more importantly it is about a more inclusive pattern of growth.

The Panel was informed that over the past six months there is now a stronger much clearer alignment between national, regional and local policy and trying to draft this strategy a year ago was more challenging. Since then, there has been the publication of the National Industrial Strategy and a better understanding of the sectors the government is trying to promote on a UK basis, and it is easy to articulate where Kirklees has relative strengths in those key national industrial sectors. Through the West Yorkshire mayor there has been work on a local growth plan and this strategy for Kirklees aims to articulate what the vision and strategy is for Kirklees and how it contributes to both the West Yorkshire and the national policy.

In terms of the structure of the document, there are a couple of organising principles:

- The first is well established around people, place and partners. When referring to people, that is around employment skills activity, helping people to participate in and benefit from a growing economy and anything that affects people either in or out of work. Place would capture a lot of the regeneration ambitions, connectivity priorities, environmental activities and things that affect the place of Kirklees. In respect of partners, the majority of that section is on businesses, because business on an economic strategy is critical, and there are other partners around such as the university that are very important. That section is on business and how the council and other agencies can create an environment where it is easier to start, grow or locate into Kirklees to start or grow a new business.

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The second is within the basic structure of the document, there are a series of objectives around productivity, inclusion and sustainability. Productivity because there is a productivity challenge in Kirklees, as there is in the rest of the region and across the UK. It is recognised that Kirklees lags regional averages on productivity and the region lags national averages.

There is a debate whether productivity is the right term, however, the point being made is that productivity drives peoples wages. This is about how much money being taken home at the end of the week. If Kirklees was to match the national average on productivity, every full-time worker would have an extra £70 per week. While productivity is an economic term, fundamentally it is about the wages an individual is able to command and businesses need to become more productive whether through investment, technology, plant and machinery processes and leadership and management. Inclusion is to ensure that everybody in society is able to benefit from, and contribute to a growing economy. Growth on its own is not enough, it is an enabler and ensuring that growth is an inclusive form of growth is essential. Sustainability is one of the big changes in this refresh compared to previous strategies and there is an emphasis given on the climate emergency and sustainability. Proactive effort will need to be made, and putting resources into tackling productivity, inclusion and sustainability at the same time.

The Panel was informed that this is just a strategy and there are action and delivery plans that sit beneath it, however it is an important articulation of the vision for Kirklees and the framework to try and realise that vision.

In response to the information presented, the Panel asked a number of questions and made comments including some of the following: -

- How is the effectiveness of the current strategy being measured and are there some benchmarks?
- How does this affect areas of deprivation is anything being done in addition for those particular areas?
- Are you anticipating any problems with this strategy actually being effective and can you foresee any areas where it may not be effective?
- In terms of supporting employers to develop their workforce particularly through higher level apprenticeships as well as skills and training, how is that to be achieved particularly as there is a cost to the employer, for example national insurance which has just been increased?
- What type of green skills and training will be available, will it be for example retrofitting buildings that will be needed for 2050?
- Is anything being done about the retention of students from Huddersfield University, working with the University, leasing out Kirklees buildings for graduates to set up start-ups?
- Do you measure any crossover between productivity and the exporting of labour, is it that people leave the area to work because there are not the certain types of jobs in this area or is it purely because they leave to get more money?
- Overall, does Kirklees look at neighbouring authorities and is there an ability to look at their strategies?

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RESOLVED:

That Cllr Graham Turner, Edward Highfield, Jonathan Nunn and Chris Duffill be thanked for providing an update on the Kirklees Inclusive Economic Strategy, Draft for consultation.