

Contact Officer: Jenny Bryce-Chan

KIRKLEES COUNCIL

GROWTH AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY PANEL

Monday 20th January 2025

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

Co-optees Chris Friend

In attendance: Cllr Moses Crook, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Transport and Housing
Cllr Graham Turner, Cabinet Member for Finance and Regeneration
Edward Highfield, Service Director, Regeneration and Skills
Lucie Wade, Project Manager, Transport Strategy and Policy
Rashid Mahmood, Head of Major Projects
Mark Varley, Asset Strategy Officer
Rory Davies, Transport Strategy and Policy Lead
Alistair Kimpton, Strategic Partnership Lead

Apologies: Councillor Aziz Daji
Jonathan Milner (Co-Optee)

1 Membership of the Panel

Apologies were received from Cllr Aziz Daji and Jonathan Milner.

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

That the minutes of the meeting held on the 9th December 2025 be approved as a correct record.

3 Declaration of Interests

Cllr Alison Munro declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in respect of agenda item 7.

4 Admission of the Public

All agenda items were considered in public.

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 Draft Kirklees Transport Strategy, Policy Themes & Consultation Plan

Cllr Moses Crook, Portfolio holder for Transport and Housing, introduced the Draft Kirklees Transport Strategy, advising the Panel that the Kirklees Transport Strategy in draft form is on route to Cabinet for approval to progress to public consultation and suggestions and comments from the Panel are welcomed.

Currently there is a great deal being developed in transport regionally, with the West Yorkshire Combined Authority's (WYCA) local transport plan which is in progress. In addition to the active travel position statement which has now been introduced. The Panel was informed that it is important to note that the draft strategy being considered is aligned with and compliments the WYCA's local transport plan.

The aim is to help deliver local priorities and to contribute to delivering the overall regional plan. The strategy reinforces application of the local transport plan in the local setting, and ensures that policies, and ultimately the development of the transport offer through projects are compliant with and support the West Yorkshire aims. It will align with other council priorities locally and meet the hyper needs of local communities in Kirklees.

It is positive that this strategy is being developed at the same time as so much transformative development is underway in the region, with mass transit bus franchising and additional powers devolved to the mayoral authority through devolution. It maximises the benefit for the area and also ensures that all development is co-ordinated regionally and working towards delivering the same outcomes.

Having a strategy can also bring additional focus to specific areas to prioritise in a local context to support regeneration and investment priorities. It will also support prioritisation of net zero ambition through development of the active travel modal shift and move towards sustainable transport locally.

This is an excellent draft strategy document and there is confidence it will be adopted, albeit with some amendments through the governance process in due course. The officers in the Transport Team are to be thanked for all the work they have undertaken on this document.

Rory Davis, Transport Strategy and Policy Lead, advised the Panel that the Transport Strategy provides an opportunity to show, that as a district, there is compliance with the West Yorkshire Mayor and West Yorkshire Combined Authorities vision for transport. Through this, Kirklees as a local authority draws down large amounts and increasing amounts of investment through bids put forward to the WYCA and to other bodies such as the Department for Transport (DfT).

Growth and Regeneration Scrutiny Panel - 20 January 2025

This presents a good opportunity to consolidate the council's position on transport matters across a range of themes, and this will enable the council to more successfully draw down funding and bring projects into the district.

The approach that will be taken with regard to consultation is that the consultation is anticipated to start in March 2025, and it is anticipated that communities will be given eight weeks of a conversation that will be taking place with the communities. A number of events will be held including on street events in some of the town centres, train stations and libraries. It is important to have a two-way conversation with local communities, to capture the views of a broad range of stakeholders, including businesses, community groups, individual members of the public and partners.

The Panel was informed that in the development of the draft strategy, which is going to consultation, a great deal of work has been undertaken behind the scenes with WYCA, with neighbouring districts both inside and outside of West Yorkshire including Rochdale and High Peak. Through that process, partner thoughts and views have been embedded into the draft strategy.

With regard to the consultation going forward, the aim is to understand partway through the consultation who has not responded which will enable the effective targeting of those people. People will be asked where they are coming from within the district, where they live, where they work and also asking the protected characteristic questions under the Equalities Act. This will mean that where there is an underrepresentation of people from certain groups, they can be targeted and brought into the conversation.

In response to the information presented, the Panel made comment and asked questions including some of the following:

- There appears to be a number of problems with this draft strategy, but the most pertinent is the limited reference to people with protected characteristics which seems to be an afterthought. The document states that an Equality Impact Assessment is advisable and doesn't say if one has been carried out. The question is, has it been carried out, and if it has how has it influenced the proposed strategy?
- The way the strategy has been written it seems to suggest that people are happy and able to take part in active travel, however people with physical impairments are not able to and this does not seem to have been considered in the strategy, or there is no evidence that it has been considered. Has the Equality Officer been involved in this because it has a profound impact on disabled people?
- There are a lot of very dark non-paved roads around the region, therefore as well as car drivers and a transport strategy, there should also be a person strategy that needs to be addressed. The issue is that people often go out at night wearing black clothing, when there are no lights. It is important that there is a message encouraging the wearing of something luminous, that they can be seen. It would be nice to have something in the strategy about the pedestrian's role in this net zero strategy.

Growth and Regeneration Scrutiny Panel - 20 January 2025

- Referring to the Council Plan, it states that the transport strategy is centred around five key strategic objectives, and when looking at the five objectives, it is difficult to see how they will be measured. For example, improving health and wellbeing, is it one percent or 20%, how would this be measured? Protecting the environment, again, how would you know if you had achieved that objective? Reading through the document, there wasn't anything in there to show this is how the objectives will be measured.
- With regard to the net zero target and the government's commitment towards electric charged vehicles. Presently it is difficult to say how many houses in the Kirklees district that does not have off street parking, which could be a barrier to achieving that.
- The strategy has identified some good objectives, that we want to see for transport in Kirklees and some good policies, however what appears to be missing are the particular actions and also the measurables in terms of following this up. For example, in five years what will be measured to show that these policies have been a success or a failure?

Cllr Susan Lee-Richards, attended the meeting and made comment and asked the following questions:

- While there are many positives in this document, the document states that there is an extensive network of greenways, and this has to be disputed. Some of the greenways are patchy or broken, e.g the Meltham Greenway, the only stretch in south Kirklees that does not go anywhere other than onto a busy and unwelcoming B6108. There is no safe route from Huddersfield Town Centre to the Birkby/Bradley Greenway. The Calder Valley Greenway is broken in Mirfield where people on cycles are expected to mix with the traffic on the A644 and the Spen ringway does not connect back with the Spen Valley Greenway at Heckmondwike. Whilst the aims can be admired, it cannot be said that there is an extensive network of greenways at the moment. The hope is that there will be improvements when funding is received from WYCA.
- Referring to page 21 of the document which refers to shifting some trips to more sustainable modes of transport, by switching away from private cars, encouraging this mode shift for people to drive using the best option. What is meant by best? Quickest, cheapest, safest, most fuel efficient, what is meant by best in that instance?

RESOLVED:

That Cllr Moses Crook and Rory Davis be thanked for providing an update on the draft Kirklees Transport Strategy, Policy Themes and Consultation Plan.

8 Community Asset Transfer

Cllr Graham Turner, Portfolio holder for Finance and Regeneration, gave a brief introduction advising the Panel that the information being presented is in relation to the Community Asset transfers.

Growth and Regeneration Scrutiny Panel - 20 January 2025

Referring to the presentation slides, Alistair Kimpton, Strategic Partnership Lead, highlighted to the Panel the breadth of the assets that had been transferred in the past. He advised that the transfers have included the Civic Hall in Slaithwaite, the Staincliffe Community Garden, and Meltham Carlile Institute which is a wide variety and illustrates the cornerstone of the approach being taken which is one of flexibility.

Mr Kimpton explained that it is recognised that all communities are different, and that all community groups are different. The buildings and assets are all quite different from each other and therefore, the approach is tailored, the policy is tailored to deliver flexibility, and it enables officers and community groups to come together to cooperate and make sure that the model is good for both sides.

The Panel was informed that Community Asset Transfer (CAT) - is the transfer of ownership and management of public land and buildings from the council to a community organisation. The last thing the council wants to do is to burden community groups with unnecessary debt, and therefore assets are transferred at less than market value for local, social, economic or environmental benefit. This is to try and ensure that they have a good chance of success.

The purpose of CATs in Kirklees is to bring to life the councils longstanding commitment as an enabling council to:-

- Invest in our communities
- Help our communities achieve their aspirations
- Ensure assets and services remain available for the community

The council introduced the Asset Advancement Policy in 2013, in response to the Quirk Review and subsequent localism agenda and the current policy was updated in 2020 and is the third iteration of the policy. At each policy update, work has been undertaken to understand what has gone well and what needs work. The result of the 2020 policy is a good example of how the community asset transfer can run in practice. A total of 27 CATs have been completed to date, 16 across South Kirklees and 11 across North Kirklees.

The policy has been developed to support the council's vision and the aim is to enable communities to deliver the services that they require. It was developed in consultation with a wide variety of stakeholders including elected members, community organisations, Third Sector Leaders, Legal Services, Corporate Landlord and localities. The policy sets out a clear and transparent framework for the asset transfer process. Including why and what assets will be considered for transfer and the eligibility criteria. When a community group is looking at an asset transfer, they can be clear on how they can meet the criteria, the conditions of the transfer and how it will be processed.

Mark Valey, Asset Strategy Officer informed the Panel that the conditions of an asset transfer and that all transfers are by a long leasehold. Each case is flexible within the policy; however, the default presumption is that all transfers will go by a long lease of up to 125 years. Freehold transfers will be considered, but only in exceptional circumstances e.g. parish and town councils. Covenants are included

Growth and Regeneration Scrutiny Panel - 20 January 2025

within the lease to ensure that the asset is predominantly restricted to community use.

The Panel was provided with information which outlined the indicative timescale aimed for, with the transferring of assets being approximately a 9-to-12-month process from start to finish. Within the policy, financial support is offered to groups, and a development grant of up to £10,000 is offered to cover professional fees, surveys and legal advice associated with the application.

The Panel was informed that some of the challenges include:

- Council economic challenges
- Competing priorities for assets
- Managing expectations of community organisations/council
- Capacity within the community
- Access to and availability of external funding
- Timescales 18 to 24-months process

In response to the information presented, the Panel made comment and asked questions including some of the following:

- In respect of the success rate, how many transfers have been successful and how many have been unsuccessful?
- When there are competing priorities for assets, how is that communicated to community groups?
- Is there a minimum level of asset that can be taken through this process, and is there any follow up after someone takes on an asset to ensure that they use it for the purpose they originally stipulated?

RESOLVED:

That Cllr Graham Turner, Alistair Kimpton and Mark Varley be thanked for providing information on Community Asset Transfers.