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KIRKLEES COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Friday 4th April 2025

Present: Councillor Cahal Burke (Chair)
Councillor Andrew Cooper
Councillor Jo Lawson

Apologies: Councillor Itrat Ali
Councillor Zarina Amin

57 Membership of Committee

Apologies were received from Councillor Itrat Ali and Councillor Zarina Amin.

58 Minutes of Previous Meeting

RESOLVED -

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 28th February 2026 be approved as a correct record.

59 Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

60 Admission of the Public

All items were considered in public session.

61 Deputations/Petitions

No deputations or petitions were received.

62 Public Question Time

No public questions were received.

**63 Strategic Intelligence Assessment and Kirklees Communities Partnership Plan
RESOLVED –**

That consideration of the item be deferred until the next meeting to allow representatives of key partners to attend.

64 Corporate Financial Management - Quarter 3 Report 2024-2025

Kevin Mulvaney, Service Director Finance presented the Corporate Financial Monitoring Report for Quarter 3 2024-2025, with reference to the report submitted to Cabinet on 11th March 2025.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Regeneration, Councillor Graham Turner, was present and introduced the item; he advised that there had been a positive movement in the Council's spending position.

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The report set out:

- The revenue headlines
- Revenue monitoring, with a breakdown across each directorate;
- Key pressures on each directorate and mitigating actions
- Analysis of Reserves
- Housing Revenue Account position, variances and revenue pressures
- Direct Schools Grant headlines including pressures and mitigations
- Collection Fund
- Position in respect of the Capital Budget and monitoring for each directorate.
- The Medium Term Capital Plan;
- Prudential and treasury management indicators; and
- An update on savings delivery across all directorates and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

The following points were highlighted:

- The projected overspend of £9.9 million revenue overspend in respect of the Council's General Fund, which was in line with the Quarter 2 position.
- An overview of the budget variances from Quarter 2 for each Directorate.
- There was an expectation that the position would improve by outturn.
- The improving position in terms of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), with a reduced overspend of £1.9 million and an expectation that this would reduce further by outturn.
- The Direct Schools Grant position remained the same as Quarter 2.
- Capital was constantly revised to reflect slippage, with a further £33 million slipped into future years. Adjustments to the Capital Plan arising from the approved budget amendments would be reflected in the outturn report.

Questions and comments were invited from Committee Members, with the following issues being covered:

- In respect of the future approach, it was explained that, for 2025/26, the decision had been taken to deal with the pressures by funding many of the overspends and it was therefore expected that the number of variations reported would be lower next year.
- In respect of the variance in the Educational Psychology budget, the service was working to improve performance in respect of care plans and additional money had been put in for 2025/26 which would reduce the chances of an overspend. In relation to the relative cost of the use of in-house and external resources, it was noted that vacancies in this area were not held and recruitment did take place where possible.
- In respect of the impact of the rise in Employer's National Insurance on health and social care budgets; the Executive Director for Adults and Health was currently in negotiation with care providers to agree fee uplift rates and these should reflect the money put in to help fund those cost increases. The impact would be clearer after the first quarter of 2025/26.
- In respect of the balancing of fiscal sustainability with the demand for services; significant additional provision had been made for children's and adult social care in 2025/26, and the updated Medium Term Financial Plan would reflect the projections for the next 3 to five years when it was submitted to Cabinet in the Autumn. Each Directorate had its own specific savings plans, agreed as part of

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the budget, which would be tracked on quarterly basis, and tight controls would remain in place on spend and vacancy management in the first quarter.

- In terms of sustainability, the Council Plan set out some additional priorities, including 'getting the basics right', and over £50 million had been put in to deliver the range of core services for all residents. The savings target of £11 million of new savings was a lot lower than in recent years. There was confidence in the approach, which would be reviewed after Quarter 1, and Scrutiny would continue to be updated on the position throughout the year.
- Information in relation to the numbers of redeployments associated with the restructure of the Parks and Greenspaces Team could be provided to Members after the meeting. Assurance was given that all possible efforts were made to mitigate the impact of any redundant posts.
- In respect of contingency arrangements for winter maintenance and road-gritting the priority/primary routes would always be gritted, as a legal obligation, and funding found to do so if necessary.

RESOLVED -

- (1) That the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Regeneration, the Chief Executive and the Service Director, Finance be thanked for attending the meeting to update the Committee.
- (2) That it be noted that financial monitoring reports will continue to be submitted to the Committee on a regular basis and that Lead Members will pick up on any items within the remit of their Panel that may require further scrutiny.
- (3) That additional information be provided for Members in respect of the redeployment of staff associated with the restructure of the Parks and Greenspaces Service.

65 Council Plan and Performance Update - Quarter 3 Report 2024-2025

Mike Henry, Head of Data and Insight, provided an update in respect of the Council's Plan and Performance Update Report for Quarter 3 2024/2025 with reference to the report submitted to Cabinet on 11th March 2025. He explained that:

- The report provided an update on progress against the 2024/2025 Council Plan, as at 31 December 2024.
- The first section of the report provided details on activity and delivery against the four priorities within the Council Plan.
- The second section provided the latest data against the Council's key measures for 2024/2025, including a summary of the direction of travel.
- Benchmarking data was included, where available, which contextualised the demand and performance trends and enabled comparison of Kirklees with regional and national rates.

In response to a question about the assessment and mitigation of risks to service delivery associated with potential overspend, it was explained that the Council's regular monitoring arrangements considered finance, performance and risk collectively to maintain a clear understanding of the position in all three areas, allowing effective management and the maintenance of tight control through triangulation of this information.

RESOLVED -

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- (1) That the Head of Data and Insight be thanked for attending the meeting and providing an update in relation to the Council Plan and Corporate Performance for Quarter 3, 2024/2025
- (2) That it be noted that the quarterly reports will continue to be submitted to the Committee on a regular basis during 2025 and Lead Members will identify any issues that they consider might require further scrutiny by their respective Panel.

66 Corporate Risk - Quarter 3 Report 2024-2025

A presentation was given by Alice Carruthers, Senior Finance Officer, in respect of the Quarter 3 2024/2025 Corporate Risk Report, with reference to the report submitted to Cabinet on 11th March 2025. She explained:

- The report reflected the position at the end of Quarter 3.
- The Care Quality Commission (CQC) had now notified the Council of its intention to inspect in May and pre-inspection packs and data had been submitted. The risk (AH02) would be updated to reflect this.
- The budget monitoring and management risk had been updated to reflect the increased certainty of a budget overspend and the robustness of the response to manage that.
- An overview of those areas currently having a red rating.
- The Committee was invited to comments and asked to consider the report in the development of their work programmes.

Questions and comments were invited from Committee Members, with the following issues being covered:

- The external auditor's report had been submitted to the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee. In respect of the comments on decision-making it was noted that this related to the 2023/24 period and the auditor's perspective of a particular decision. It was felt that this did not reflect decision-making as a whole but might be used as a learning point in relation to ensuring openness and transparency of decision-making.
- The inter-relationship between the Cabinet (Executive), Corporate Governance and Audit Committee and Scrutiny, and the responsibility of each, was noted: Executive had responsibility for managing risks, Scrutiny was responsible for holding the Executive to account in respect of the management of risk and Governance and Audit held responsibility for reviewing the system for managing risks. There was consequently the possibility of there being a small chance of duplication in respect of the material being considered.
- In respect of management of the impact of external factors, such as government funding or national policy changes, and mitigation of associated risks, it was explained that services were expected to undertake horizon-scanning in respect of regulatory or policy change to ensure that the Authority was undertaking the right level of engagement with the relevant bodies and peers and was prepared for the future. Financial planning for changes was factored into the budget planning process.
- The reassessment of risks associated with recent changes to welfare benefits and National Insurance was under consideration and would be factored into the Quarter 4 Risk Report. Specific services were assessing the potential for possible challenges associated with affordability.

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- It was noted that there was also a need to ensure that individuals understood the changes and any impact on their position and residents were being encouraged to seek advice and support; the Council was working with partners to assist with this.

RESOLVED -

- (1) That the Senior Finance Officer and the Chief Executive be thanked for attending the meeting and providing an update in relation to the Corporate Risk - Quarter 3 Report 2024-2025.
- (2) That it be noted that the quarterly reports will continue to be submitted to the Committee on a regular basis during 2025 and Lead Members will identify any issues that they consider might require further scrutiny by their respective Panel.

67

Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge - Action Plan

Councillor Carole Pattison, the Leader of the Council, introduced the item commenting that the Peer Challenge had been a beneficial and thorough process, and the report accurately reflected the position. Actions were already in progress to address a number of the issues raised and this action plan sought to further advance this work. Comments and suggestions from the Committee to support the delivery, monitoring, and reporting of the actions over the coming year were welcomed.

A presentation was given by Stephen Bonnell, Head of Policy Partnerships and Corporate Planning, in respect of the action plan developed to respond to the recommendations contained in the Local Government Association's (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge Report 2024. This highlighted:

- Key points of feedback received from Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee and Group Leaders.
- The actions planned, including timescales and the Service Director with responsibility for each, under the following headlines:
 - Recommendation 1 - Continue to keep a grip on the Council's budget
 - Recommendation 2 - Apply successes and learning from transformation across the Council more widely.
 - Recommendation 3 - Regeneration Plans
 - Recommendation 4 - Planning
 - Recommendation 5 - Working with Business and Economic Partners.
 - Recommendation 6 - Member roles and development
 - Recommendation 7- Continuing to improve performance
 - Recommendation 8- A longer-term horizon
- Delivery was underway and the actions would be closely monitored over the coming months.
- There would be a LGA Progress Review in September 2025.
- The LGA and the Council would publish a progress report no later than November 2025.

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Questions and comments were invited from Committee Members, with the following issues being covered:

- It was noted that an informal scrutiny session had taken place to allow Members' comments to be fed into the development of the action plan.
- The commitment to supporting locally owned and managed businesses was welcomed; this needed to be a core focus to retain money within the local economy.
- It was noted that a Kirklees Economic Summit was planned to consider aspirations for growth and this would be one of the areas of focus.
- In relation to external funding, it would be advantageous to gain a deeper understanding of the approach and what was being done to strengthen the voice of the authority with the Combined Authority to ensure it received an appropriate share of investment (and how this could be demonstrated to others).
- Reference was made to the WYCA Brownfield Housing Fund, where Kirklees appeared to be underperforming, and an undertaking was given to explore the position in respect of this scheme.
- It was noted that there were a number of different Combined Authority funding streams and they could be, and had been, split between the districts in differing proportions.
- The action plan reflected the need to be clear on what Kirklees was asking for from the Combined Authority and ensuring that the district gained a fair share of the available funding.
- The aim was to ensure that the Authority's longer term strategies were established so that they were available, when needed, to submit for relevant funding.
- An example was given in respect of mass transit; there was a clear understanding among relevant officers and senior members who were interacting with the Combined Authority in respect of Kirklees' 'asks' from that scheme.
- The potential challenges associated with the numbers of new Councillors and changes to the overall political composition and party structures were acknowledged but it was considered that this could also have a positive impact.
- It was important that there was a clear understanding of the Councillor role.
- Reference was made to a previous initiative that had involved Councillors and frontline staff meeting to discuss the relationship and working arrangements; it was considered that this had been an effective method of enhancing understanding of roles for both parties.
- It was noted that, in the past, member development opportunities had been available over a longer period.
- Assurance was given that support for new Councillors and the Member Development Framework was already under consideration.
- The role of the Councillor/Council needed to be clearly defined and communicated to residents, this would assist with managing expectations.
- Engagement with Councillor Enquiries and Councillors would be valuable, to gather data on the reasons residents made contact with Councillors. This could assist in identifying any themes that needed to be addressed.
- Recommendation 8 was considered to be pivotal in terms of the need to be clear about what the Council did and did not do but also to ensure that the system was designed so that it delivered first time. The role of Councillors could then be to

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flag issues within communities that the Authority was not necessarily aware of, and in areas that could make a difference in terms of the Council's approach, rather than reporting problems with service delivery. An element of this would be providing Councillors with the necessary information to respond to queries from residents.

- There was a need for a longer-term horizon for policy formulation as well as key decisions.
- In response to a comment about the focus being on ensuring sustainable and inclusive growth, it was explained that the Inclusive Economic Strategy did reflect the importance of this approach but this could be reiterated with the relevant team.

The Head of Policy and Partnerships and Corporate Planning undertook to feedback the Committee's points to the relevant Executive and Service Directors.

RESOLVED -

- (1) That the Leader of the Council, Chief Executive and Head of Policy and Partnerships and Corporate Planning be thanked for attending to update the Committee.
- (2) That the Action Plan be noted and the points raised by the Committee be considered in delivery of the actions.
- (3) That it be noted that the Action Plan will be submitted to Cabinet, for approval, on 8th April and to Council, for noting, on 23rd April and that a further report will be submitted to this Committee to provide an update on progress in Summer 2025.
- (4) That further information be provided for Members in respect of the WYCA Brownfield Housing Fund.

68 Lead Members' Updates

The Lead Members for the Health & Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel and the Environment & Climate Change Panel updated the Committee on the work currently being undertaken by their panels.

69 Work Programme 2024-25

The latest version of the Committee's Work Programme for 2024/2025 was considered.