

Contact Officer: Sheila Dykes

KIRKLEES COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Friday 12th September 2025

Present: Councillor Cahal Burke (Chair)
Councillor Itrat Ali
Councillor Zarina Amin
Councillor Andrew Cooper
Councillor Jo Lawson

In attendance: Councillor Carole Pattison, Leader of the Council
Councillor Graham Turner, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Regeneration
Martin Dearnley, Head of Audit and Risk
Mike Henry, Head of Data and Insight
Kelly Hollis, Policy and Partnerships Officer
Kevin Mulvaney, Service Director Finance

23 Membership of Committee

No apologies were received.

24 Minutes of Previous Meeting

RESOLVED -

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 11th July 2025 be approved as a correct record.

25 Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

26 Admission of the Public

All items were considered in public session.

27 Deputations/Petitions

No deputations or petitions were received.

28 Public Question Time

No public questions were received.

29 Council Plan and Performance Update - Quarter 1 Report 2025-2026

Councillor Carole Pattison, the Leader of the Council introduced the report in respect of the Council Plan and Performance for Quarter 1 of 2025/26, supported by Mike Henry, Head of Data and Insight.

The report had been submitted to Cabinet on 9th September 2025 and included:

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- Details on activity and delivery against the four priorities within the Council Plan and planned activity for Quarter 2.
- The latest data against the Council's key measures for 2025/2026, including a summary of the direction of travel and planned activity for Quarter 2.
- Benchmarking data to contextualise the demand and performance trends and enable comparison of Kirklees with regional and national rates.

The following points were highlighted:

- **Getting the Basics Right:**
 - Tight budget controls had been maintained.
 - The Highways Capital Plan 2025-27 had been approved.
 - Improvements were being made in respect of the focus on customers.
- **Protecting the Vulnerable and Achieving Inclusion:**
 - Investment had been made into additional provision for children, with good progress towards the improvement and expansion of two special schools.
 - A scheme supporting neurodiversity inclusion had commenced in 14 schools.
 - Modernisation of day care facilities for adults with complex learning disabilities and autism was underway.
 - A dedicated apprenticeship scheme had been introduced to support care leavers.
- **Thriving People and Communities:**
 - Continued strengthening of partnerships.
 - Environmental sustainability improvement activities, including tree planting and management/support for the White Rose Forest partnership.
 - Public safety issues were being addressed.
 - A Physical Activity Strategy was being developed.
- **Local Economic Growth:**
 - The Inclusive Economic Strategy had been approved.
 - Good progress was being made in relation to the Cultural Heart and Dewsbury Blueprint.
 - A range of projects were progressing in Batley, Cleckheaton, Heckmondwike, Holmfirth and Marsden.
 - The Council's Transport Strategy had recently been approved.
- There were ongoing challenges in respect of:
 - Increased demand for adult social care services.
 - Rising numbers of looked-after children.
 - An increase in incidents of fly-tipping.
- In relation to performance against key measures:
 - The percentage of Education, Health and Care Plans issued within 20 weeks had improved.
 - Significant improvements had been made in addressing damp, mould, and condensation cases in Council properties.
 - A reduction had been achieved in respect of the number of households in temporary accommodation.

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

- In response to a question about the rise in adult social care cases and early intervention and prevention, it was explained that efforts were being made to

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help keep people in their homes longer, including through the use of technology. The recently opened day care facility in Mirfield provided respite care and also provided information and support for carers and relatives of people with dementia.

- The increase in fly-tipping was of concern and it was suggested that a comprehensive strategy, including media campaigns, CCTV, convictions and community engagement would assist in addressing this issue. Assurance was given that the fly-tipping strategy was being implemented in phases and additional staff and equipment were in place. A 'blitz' was in progress to clear the backlog, with a target of 8 to 12 weeks.
- The importance of prevention, education and working with the community in reducing the amounts of waste and disposing of waste responsibly was emphasised; fly-tipping needed to be completely socially unacceptable. There had been an increase in the numbers of people prepared to make statements and community groups would not accept adverts such as 'man with a van'.
- It was suggested that some people may be unable to afford the charges for the Council's bulky waste collection service but noted that the charges could be cheaper than other alternatives and may not be as much as residents perceived; discounts were offered in some cases. Suggestions included offering one free bulky waste collection per household.
- Reporting fly-tipping on the website did not generate a response or updates.
- It was important that initiatives such as the 'blitz' on fly-tipping were communicated effectively, and providing timescales was also important.
- Use of the online reporting portal was encouraged as it provided data that could identify hotspots, levels of waste and how long it had been in situ.
- Improvements in the timescales for Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) were welcomed, but it was noted that this was an issue that was still being raised with ward councillors.
- Work was being undertaken with schools to provide the support that was needed for children through working in clusters, additional SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) places were being provided and two new schools were progressing. The Authority's strategy was recognised as being good practice.
- In terms of the EHCP complaints process, this had been streamlined and there was a team to deal with these issues. It was noted that the complaints covered a range of issues and that officers aimed to work with parents to be able to access what their child needed.
- Getting the basics right was not just about financing but getting the processes right such as ensuring the necessary equipment and/or staff were available to be able to provide services.
- The sustainability and management of trees planted as part of the White Rose Forest initiative was discussed. There were targets in place for Kirklees and the district was performing well, though long-term maintenance was a separate issue; if they were on Council land they would be maintained by the relevant service(s).
- More detail on the Customer and Access Programme was requested, noting that some residents did not or could not use online facilities.
- The progress on damp, mould and condensation cases was commended. It was explained that there had to be careful management of the different trades involved to achieve this and the backlog had now been cleared.

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- The reduction in the use of temporary accommodation was welcomed. In respect of plans to reduce the numbers further, efforts were being made to increase the amount of suitable housing stock and thus reduce reliance on bed and breakfast accommodation, with the first priority being families. Further information could be provided to Members in respect of the length of the average stay in bed and breakfast accommodation.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the Leader and the Head of Data and Insight be thanked for attending to present the update in respect of the Council Plan and Performance for Quarter 1 2025/26.
- (2) That the current position be noted and it be recommended that these reports continue to be submitted to the Committee on a regular basis so that Lead Members can pick up any items within the remit of their Panel that may require further scrutiny.
- (3) That the Committee requests the provision of further information in respect of:
 - (i) The Customer and Access Programme.
 - (ii) The average length of stay in temporary bed and breakfast accommodation in Kirklees.

30

Devolution Update - Impact on Kirklees and Engagement at Regional Level

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Carole Pattison, presented a report which summarised the contents of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill for the Committee's information and to facilitate consideration of the potential impact on Kirklees and engagement at regional level. Kelly Hollis, Policy and Partnerships Officer was also present for the item.

The following points were highlighted:

- The bill had recently had its second reading in the House of Commons.
- There had been recent changes in Government ministerial roles and it was not known at this stage if there would be any changes to the bill as a result.
- Local government reorganisation would have a less significant impact on Kirklees, as it was already a Unitary Authority.
- The West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) would be designated as an Established Mayoral Strategic Authority, with a few changes in governance.
- The main impact of the bill would be in relation to the integrated settlement, which was expected to be implemented in April 2026.
- WYCA was working to identify the additional powers and funding that the region would wish to be devolved and was actively preparing for future changes. The relevant workstreams were set out in the report and updates were anticipated in the near future.
- Further detail was awaited from the government across a number of areas including the neighbourhood governance arrangements. Regulations and guidance, on this and other elements, such as the local audit system, would be issued separately following the Bill becoming law.

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

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- There was a need to know how neighbourhood governance would operate. Various methods had been used in Kirklees in the past, such as use of the Place Standard and area committees. Funding would be needed to effectively implement it and allow focus on neighbourhood priorities.
- It was noted that the Local Government Association were advocating for 'new burdens funding' to support neighbourhood governance.
- The restoration of the alternative vote system for electing regional mayors and the proposals for 'Community Right to Buy' were welcomed.

RESOLVED-

- (1) That the Leader and the Policy and Partnerships Officer be thanked for attending to update the Committee.
- (2) That it be noted that further updates will be provided to members of the Committee, via a briefing note, in December 2025 and February 2026.

31

Corporate Risk - Quarter 1 Report 2025-2026

Councillor Graham Turner, Finance and Regeneration Portfolio Holder, introduced the Corporate Risk Report for Quarter 1 2025/26 with reference to the report submitted to Cabinet on 9th September, supported by Martin Dearnley, Head of Audit and Risk.

The following points were highlighted:

- There had been minimal change since Quarter 4.
- One new risk had been added in respect of project management and delivery. This was to be further developed and was rated amber.
- Two risks had been removed: 'Adult Social Care Assurance Framework' and 'Data Insight for Adults Services' and were now being managed at service level.
- The score for 'Climate Change' had increased due to gaps in skills and staffing affecting the ability to deliver grant-funded initiatives and secure future third-party funding.
- The 'Budget Monitoring and Management' risk score had reduced, reflecting the tracking and control in place, although it was acknowledged that financial risk remained a key risk.
- The score for 'Procurement Processes' had reduced due to the successful implementation of new procedures and staff training aligned with the Procurement Act.
- There were 16 red-rated risks, including 'Medium-Term Financial Sustainability', 'Cybersecurity', 'Contract Management', 'SEND Provision', 'Homelessness and Temporary Accommodation', 'Housing Safety and Quality', and 'Capital Plan Management'.
- An overview of the full register, with information provided in relation to the current and previous risk score, the controls in operation and the actions being taken.

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

- It would be a good idea to have an opportunities register, particularly for areas such as climate change.

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- The co-benefits of action on climate change should be emphasised, such as reduced fuel bills, improved air quality and job creation.
- Issues with staffing and recruitment in climate-related roles was of concern, as this could potentially limit the Council's ability to take opportunities, an example being the Warm Homes Local Funding.
- Climate change was acknowledged as a significant challenge and the view was expressed that, whilst more could always be done, the Council was doing what it could within the constraints. It was noted that the difficulties in recruitment extended beyond local government.
- Local area energy plans were being developed by some other local authorities and this was an issue that the Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Panel should look at.
- Several initiatives were underway in respect of alternative provision for temporary accommodation and there was a strong desire to reduce reliance on bed and breakfast accommodation and improve homelessness support.
- There was a hope that upcoming legislation aimed at regulating landlords and improving housing security for tenants may assist in preventing some homelessness.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the Cabinet Member for Finance and Regeneration, and the Head of Audit and Risk be thanked for attending to update the Committee.
- (2) That the current position be noted and it be recommended that these reports continue to be submitted to the Committee on a regular basis so that Lead Members can pick up any items within the remit of their Panel that may require further scrutiny.

32 Corporate Financial Monitoring Report - Quarter 1 2025-2026

Kevin Mulvaney, the Service Director, Finance gave a presentation in relation to the financial monitoring for Quarter 1 2025/26, with reference to the report submitted to Cabinet on 9th September 2025.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Regeneration, Councillor Graham Turner, was present and introduced the item.

The presentation went through:

- The revenue headlines.
- Quarter 1 Forecast and Outturn, with a breakdown across each directorate.
- The high-level variations for each directorate.
- Analysis of the variances for each directorate.
- Housing Revenue Account (HRA) position.
- Capital headlines and re-profiling.
- Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) position.

The following points were highlighted:

- A projected overspend of £5.9 million was reported for Quarter 1, noting that this was the lowest Q1 overspend since the pandemic and there was optimism about achieving a balanced budget by year-end.

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- Key financial pressures continue to stem from demand-led services such as Children's Services and Adult Social Care.
- Investment in future service delivery in these areas was ongoing, although the benefits would take time to have an impact.
- Children's Services showed a £3.9 million overspend, primarily due to increased numbers of looked after children, external placements and a rising average weekly cost. It was noted however, that Kirklees compared favourably to statistical neighbours in terms of the numbers of looked-after children.
- Adult Social Care projected a circa £1.7 million overspend, with significant challenges in achieving savings targets related to client income and debt collection.
- Place Directorate faced a £1.5 million overspend, mitigated partially by reserves. The key pressure areas were home-to-school transport, property management and maintenance costs, landbank, parking and highways.
- Public Health, Corporate and Central showed an underspend of £0.7 million, although attention was drawn to additional demand affecting legal services.
- The Council was using contingency reserves to manage pressures, including £1.5 million for home-to-school transport and circa £400k for the delayed care homes transfer.
- The HRA was broadly balanced with minor variances.
- The Capital Plan had been reprofiled with approximately £10 million moved to future years.
- The DSG deficit was forecast to increase by £12.5 million, bringing the cumulative deficit to over £75 million. It was noted that this was a national issue and a White Paper was expected in Autumn 2025 which would establish the Government's approach.

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

- The Council had entered into a 'Safety Valve Agreement' with the Department for Education (DfE) to manage high needs block pressures. The Council had committed £10 million over five years, and Government approximately £2.3 million annually plus a significant additional grant to support the provision of two special schools, with the aim of reducing the cost of external placements.
- In response to a question about the Government's approach and the conditions attached to such agreements, it was explained that the current government was honouring existing agreements but not entering into new ones. It was anticipated that future policy would be included in the upcoming White Paper.
- It was noted that the Council had been commended by the DfE for its work on the Safety Valve.
- The £9.9 million re-profiling of the Capital Plan had been undertaken since the July rollover report and had contributed to reducing borrowing needs. The estimated revenue saving from re-profiling was generally based on approximately £80,000 per £1 million, if borrowing over 25 years, but the calculation was complex as there were two parts, the interest on the borrowing and the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP).

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the Cabinet Member for Finance and Regeneration and Service Director – Finance be thanked for attending to update the Committee.

- (2) That the current position be noted and it be recommended that these reports continue to be submitted to the Committee on a regular basis so that Lead Members can pick up any items within the remit of their Panel that may require further scrutiny.

33 **Medium Term Financial Strategy**

Kevin Mulvaney, the Service Director, Finance gave a presentation on the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), with reference to the report submitted to Cabinet on 9th September 2025.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Regeneration, Councillor Graham Turner, was present and introduced the item.

The presentation went through:

- The basis of the Government's Fair Funding Review 2.0.
- The Key Funding and Pay Assumptions.
- An explanation of the 2026-27 Funding.
- 2026-27 MTFS Build Up, including a breakdown by directorate.
- MTFS Summary Position 2026-27 to 2030-31
- Next Steps.

The following points were highlighted:

- The MTFS established the financial framework for the Council's budget planning for 2026-27 to 2030-31 and reflected assumptions in relation to funding, inflation, service demand, and national policy changes.
- A budget gap of £18 million was forecast for 2026/27 which would require some reduction in budget pressures and new savings to deliver a balanced budget.
- The recent changes in the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) were noted and advice was awaited on whether this would change the approach in terms of funding local government.
- The Government's Fair Funding Review consultation had concluded in August 2025 and the response was expected in mid to late October.
- The MTFS assumed Kirklees would gain funding but the Government had stated that the figures were not confirmed. A prudent position had been taken of 60% of the figure from the modelling, which equated to £6.7 million.
- The assumptions in terms of Council Tax increase and pay inflation.
- The position in respect of the Collection Fund and Reserves.
- The key cost and income pressures, across the directorates.
- A cumulative gap of £56.3 million over five years.
- The report would be submitted to Council on 17th September 2025.
- Future action, in the short term:
 - Review and update pressures based on latest information.
 - Finalise Capital Plan review.
 - Give Services three-year savings targets.
 - Await Government response, Local Government Policy Statement, and Chancellor's budget (26th November 2025).
 - Budget proposals to be submitted to Cabinet on 2nd December 2025.

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

- The assumed gain from the Fair Funding allocation was welcomed but was insufficient given the scale of the challenges faced by the Council. It was noted that the gain from Fair Funding was a one-year figure, with potential to rise over the three years.
- In response to queries about the Council's contributions to the West Yorkshire Pension Fund, it was explained that:
 - The fund was currently in surplus and a consultation was underway (closing 3rd October) regarding potential reductions in employer contributions.
 - Representations would be made to support significant savings, whilst recognising the need for sustainability.
 - A 1% reduction in employer contributions could equate to savings of over £2 million.
 - No assumptions had been built into the MTFs, pending the outcome of the consultation.
 - There would not be an impact on members' pensions.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the Cabinet Member, Finance and Regeneration and Service Director – Finance be thanked for attending to present the Medium-Term Financial Strategy to the Committee.
- (2) That it be noted that the Medium-Term Financial Strategy was considered by Cabinet on 9th September 2025 and would be submitted to Council on 17th September 2025.
- (3) That the proposed engagement with Scrutiny on the budget proposals for 2026/27, at a dedicated meeting in January 2026, to help inform the development of the proposals in advance of consideration by Cabinet and Council in February 2026, be welcomed.

34 Allocation of Scrutiny Co-optee for 2025-26

The Committee considered a report in respect of the allocation of a co-optee to the Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Panel for the remainder of the 2025/26 municipal year.

RESOLVED –

That the appointment of Kevin Evans as a co-opted member on the Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Panel, for the remainder of the 2025/26 municipal year, be approved.

35 Lead Members' Updates

The Lead Members for each of the Scrutiny Panels gave an update in relation to the work currently being undertaken by their panel:

- Environment and Climate Change
- Health and Adult Social Care
- Growth and Regeneration
- Children's

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The Chair of the Committee provided an update in respect of the Armed Forces Covenant (AFC), reporting that:

- The Council had been awarded the Gold Award in the AFC Employer Recognition Scheme for 2025, in recognition of its outstanding commitment to supporting the armed forces community. Congratulations were offered to all those involved.
- There had been a good response to the introduction of an informal armed forces staff network, with a mix of veterans, reservists, cadet force adult volunteers and family members expressing interest.
- A networking event and drop-in had been arranged in partnership with Huddersfield Royal Infirmary on 24th September 2025.

36

Work Programme 2025-2026

The latest version of the Committee's Work Programme for 2025-2026 was submitted for consideration.