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KIRKLEES COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Friday 25th July 2025

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

In attendance: Councillor Nosheen Dad – Adult Social Care and Corporate
Portfolio Holder
Andy Simcox – Service Director, Strategy and Innovation

Apologies: Councillor Itrat Ali

15 Membership of Committee

Apologies were received from Councillor Itrat Ali.

16 Declaration of Interests

No declarations of interest were received.

17 Admission of the Public

All items were considered in public session.

18 Deputations and Petitions

No deputations or petitions were submitted.

19 Public Question Time

No questions were asked.

20 Corporate Portfolio Priorities 2025/2026

Councillor Nosheen Dad, the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Corporate, gave a presentation in respect of her priorities for 2025/26.

Also present was Andy Simcox, Service Director for Strategy and Innovation. Councillor Dad explained that she had three main priorities within the Corporate element of her portfolio:

Supporting the most vulnerable in Kirklees:

Support was offered to residents in financial crisis working closely with partners, such as third sector organisations, to maximise the impact. This included the effective use of the Household Support Fund (HSF) which facilitated the provision of targeted support and advice services to help people improve their financial circumstances through prevention and building resilience. The HSF was due to be replaced by the new Crisis and Resilience Fund from April 2026.

Championing an inclusive workplace:

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There was a commitment to making the Council a great place to work by ensuring all staff felt heard, valued, and included. This included working collaboratively with staff, trade unions, and employee networks to support open communication and meaningful participation. As an example, Project Search was a collaborative, supported internship programme, delivered alongside partners, and designed to help young people with learning disabilities and/or autism spectrum conditions transition from education into employment.

Delivery of an inclusive and accessible customer service to all our communities:

To ensure that all residents could easily access the services they need through Kirklees Direct (the Council's Customer Contact Centre). The Customer Access Programme was ongoing which focused on improvements for customers and addressing their needs.

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

- The parameters of the portfolio had changed from last year. There was continuity, in particular, in respect of supporting the most vulnerable and championing an inclusive workplace for all staff.
- In terms of welfare changes, and the potential impact on benefits and wider services associated with the replacement of the Household Support Fund (HSF) with the Crisis and Resilience Fund in April 2026, it was explained that detailed guidance was still awaited from the Government. Forward planning work was being undertaken and the changes would be factored into the programme to ensure that nobody fell behind.
- There was an awareness of the impact of transition on residents who might not be eligible under new criteria and ensuring that those that needed extra support were safeguarded as much as possible.
- The hope was that the difference was focussed mainly on the change in approach in terms of building resilience within communities whilst supporting them.
- Further information could be presented once the detail was available, although the timescale between the guidance being received and implementation may be tight.
- There was a very dedicated central advice team which assisted residents to identify any benefits that they were entitled to or other funding that they could access. The Council also worked very closely with third sector organisations on this issue. Ward Councillors who were aware of residents needing support should encourage them to get in touch with the Council's team or third sector organisations who could help them. Communications activity was also undertaken to raise public awareness through the Council's channels to increase uptake.
- If access to services was not working effectively then this led to residents contacting their ward councillors. There were issues with the telephony system and some residents did not have access to online services or found them challenging to operate. It would be helpful to capture the reasons why residents approached councillors to see if there were any recurring themes so that this information could be used to inform improvements. It was also important that ward councillors were able to access the information they needed and get a

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timely response to queries to assist them in dealing with their constituents' concerns.

- Analysis of data could also be used in relation to which services people were trying to access, such as the volume of calls and wait times. The Customer Access Programme was considering these issues, including customer expectations and what improvements could be made, and it was acknowledged that data about the contact with councillors could be a key part of that.
- This data could also assist in tracking whether the position had improved.
- Digital inclusion was one of the key issues in the future digital strategy with consideration of making the best use of technology to ensure that it was as simple as possible to use, but also ensuring that the needs of residents were considered and people were not being excluded by any of those sorts of improvements. It was noted that the digital strategy was on the Committee's work programme.
- It would be helpful to know how changes in customer service would be monitored and evaluated, and the outcomes that were expected.
- In addition to the ongoing staff survey, consistent engagement with staff was undertaken through the joint consultative group, the various employee networks and the trade unions. Any ideas from staff about what they would like in terms of engagement or how they could feel more valued and heard were welcomed. There was a wish for staff to feel comfortable in approaching managers with concerns, without worrying about repercussions and to feel that they were heard, were valued and were part of a positive change.
- The current staff survey was live at this point in time, data on the response rate could be provided for Committee Members. Significant efforts were being made to maximise participation and the responses would be used to support future actions.
- The initial point of contact with the trade unions was the Joint Consultative Group but one-to-ones were also being organised for the Portfolio Holder to build that relationship and discuss the priorities and develop two-way support.
- In addition to staff surveys, it was considered that departmental/team meetings which provided a safe space for a catch-up and for issues to be raised could also be very useful. It was acknowledged that this was good practice, to allow engagement on an ongoing basis, and was encouraged within the Council, whilst the survey would provide a snapshot at a particular point in time. It was noted that it could also be helpful in terms of being able to regularly check on the wellbeing of staff, particularly in light of the increase in working from home.
- The work being undertaken by Project Search was very valuable in helping young people move from education to employment.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Corporate be thanked for attending to present her priorities for 2025/26.
- (2) That the stated priorities for the Corporate Portfolio for 2025/26 be noted and the Committee request that a progress report be presented at an appropriate time.
- (3) That a report be added to the Committee's Work Programme in respect of the replacement of the Household Support Fund and the impact on Kirklees' residents.
- (4) That a visit be organised to see the work being undertaken by Project Search.

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21 **Kirklees Scrutiny Work Programmes 2025/2026**

The Chair introduced the Committee's Work Programme for 2025/26.

The Chairs of each of the four standing Scrutiny Panels below, introduced their initial Work Programmes for 2025/26:

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

RESOLVED -

- (1) That the Scrutiny Panel Work Programmes for 2025/26 be agreed.
- (2) That the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee Work Programme for 2025/26 be approved.
- (3) That the Lead Members be thanked for introducing their Work Programmes and that progress updates be given at future meetings.

22 **Concluding Remarks**

The Chair provided an update in respect of the Armed Forces Covenant, which had been discussed at the May meeting. Members had recently visited Tommy's Lounge, along with the relevant Cabinet Member; this had proved to be a very interesting and worthwhile visit. He had requested that he be updated in respect of the bid for funding to develop the facility into a 'one-stop shop' to assist veterans. In relation to the Committee's recommendation that all Councillors should take every opportunity to raise awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant and to encourage local businesses and organisations in their area to sign, a briefing note was in development to assist them in this.