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## **KIRKLEES COUNCIL**

### **GROWTH AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY PANEL**

**Monday 26th January 2026**

Present: Councillor Zarina Amin (Chair)  
Councillor Timothy Bamford  
Councillor Donna Bellamy  
Councillor Harry McCarthy  
Councillor Alison Munro

In attendance: Cllr Moses Crook, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member  
for Transport and Housing  
Julie Woodfine, Heat Network Manager  
Phil Jones, Service Director for Homes and  
Neighbourhoods  
David Shepherd, Executive Director for Place  
Mathais Franklin, Head of Planning and Development  
Elaine Orme, Mass Transit and Rail Project Manager

#### **35 Membership of the Panel**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Yusra Hussain and Chris Friend.

#### **36 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

##### **RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on the 15 December be approved as a correct record.

#### **37 Declaration of Interests**

No interests were declared.

#### **38 Admission of the Public**

All agenda items were considered in public session.

#### **39 Deputations/Petitions**

No deputations or petitions were received.

#### **40 Public Question Time**

No public questions were received.

**41 Building Safety Compliance Update**

Cllr Moses Crook, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Transport and Housing, introduced the agenda item informing the Panel that the report provides an update on the Council's compliance with building safety requirements as a social landlord. The report sets out performance across the six core areas of statutory compliance, fire safety, lift safety, asbestos management, water hygiene, electrical safety and gas safety. It also includes an update on the management of damp, mould and condensation, which, alongside electrical safety, is now subject to new mandatory response times and service standards introduced through Awaab's Law.

The report provides information on current performance, as well as areas identified for further improvement and the actions to be implemented as part of the ongoing continuous improvement programme. It outlines the arrangements in place to provide assurance that the requirements of both the Regulator of Social Housing and the Building Safety Regulator are being met. The report also highlights the significant transformation achieved in the approach to managing damp, mould and condensation, an issue previously discussed in detail at both Scrutiny and Council acknowledging that further progress remains a priority.

Cllr Crook informed the Panel that housing service compliance is not treated as a set of isolated regulatory boxes to tick. Instead, the focus is on meeting legal requirements and ensuring that this is reflected in tenants' day-to-day experience, as part of a wider commitment for continuous improvement.

The service is working towards making statutory compliance and assurance a routine, business-as-usual activity. This will create more space to concentrate on what really matters to tenants beyond the certificates and checks. It is important that tenants should feel warm in their homes, not just know that their gas system is compliant; they should feel safe and not just receive confirmation that fire safety standards have been met. This approach aims to shift the conversation from simply meeting the rules to genuinely improving outcomes for tenants.

The Panel was informed that there is confidence the service is now getting the compliance foundations right, and that continued focus will be placed on ensuring tenants not only benefit from this progress but feel it in their day-to-day experience. The aim remains to ensure tenants are comfortable and content in their homes, as well as safe and secure, as improvements continue to be delivered.

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

- It is reassuring to see that progress is being made on compliance projects across the Council. In relation to effective tenant engagement and data quality, how does the Council plan to ensure it receives high-quality data and could the new tenant forums being established play a role in supporting that?
- Out of the six safety areas mentioned, which currently presents the highest risk for tenants?

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- The report refers to the access barriers specifically the difficulties entering properties which can prevent essential works and investigations from taking place. What steps are being taken to improve access to tenants' properties in situations where complex circumstances may be preventing entry?
- In relation to water safety, what mechanisms are currently in place to provide assurance to tenants that their homes and others are being kept safe, given that external assurance is currently limited and may only be introduced in the future?
- How many fire incidents have occurred and do the causes appear to relate to the condition/fabric of the buildings, or to tenant behaviour?

### **RESOLVED:**

That the Cabinet Member and Officers be thanked for providing an update on Building Safety Compliance.

## **42 District Heating Update**

Cllr Moses Crook introduced the agenda item, informing the Panel that the report provides an update on the district heating networks within Homes and Neighbourhoods, following audit findings in 2024, which showed that full cost recovery were not being achieved in all cases. Cllr Crook explained that this sits within the wider context of sharply rising energy prices at the time, influenced by the conflict in Ukraine and other international factors.

The Panel was informed that the report outlines the process and timeline for implementing the new metering and billing contract and describes the approach to setting charges to ensure full cost recovery from April 2026. This includes proactive engagement with the tenants and leaseholders directly affected.

An update is also provided on the newly created Heat Network Manager post, appointed in Quarter 3, which has been established to oversee these areas of work. The role includes responsibility for the Council's district heating provision and for developing future retrofit strategies to ensure that these systems operate as efficiently as possible.

The Panel was informed that additional external funding has been secured to support the move towards greater efficiency, with £37,000 awarded through the Heat Network Efficiency Scheme. This funding will contribute to improving the performance and effectiveness of the Council's district heating systems. Where the Council operates a district heating scheme, it is essential to maximise efficiency both to reduce the overall carbon footprint in line with the Council's commitment to becoming carbon neutral by 2038, and to ensure the lowest possible heating costs for tenants.

Phil Jones, Service Director for Homes and Neighbourhoods informed the Panel that a key point to note is the progression in dealing with some of the issues around the audit action in particular. However, it does not stop there as there is a need to look at what the next steps are around district heating, that demonstrates continued improvement with the actions required. The team are now looking at how the district

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heating system can be developed and modernised to ensure it is more fit for purpose and more affordable for tenants.

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

- In relation to the daily admin fee, will it remain at a similar level under the new provider, and is there a shortfall forecast for 2025/2026?

### **RESOLVED:**

That the Cabinet Member and Officers be thanked for providing an update on District Heating.

### **43 Mass Transit Spatial Development Framework Development Plan Document update**

Cllr Moses Crook, introduced the agenda item, informing the Panel that the report provides an update on progress with the development of the Joint Mass Transit Special Development Framework Development Plan Document.

In summary, the Panel was reminded that the process is complex, and that both Cabinet and Council have previously approved the delegation of constitutional powers to a West Yorkshire Combined Authority-hosted Joint Member Committee, which is responsible for approving the Regulation 18 and Regulation 19 consultation drafts.

Councillor Crook advised that he is the member holding the delegated authority and had attended the first meeting of the Joint Member Committee where the near-final draft for Regulation 18 consultation was approved. This draft has already been shared with all members across Kirklees Council.

Cllr Crook further reminded the Panel that the development of a Joint Development Plan Document has important implications for spatial planning beyond mass transit, and that ongoing engagement and involvement in the process also serves as a form of lobbying for further investment into the region.

The Panel was informed that the powers being developed through joint work will enable influence over spatial planning at a regional level, with weight equivalent to the Council's own Spatial Development Framework and the forthcoming Local Plan (Mark 2). These powers will shape decisions over the next 25 years, not only in relation to mass transit but also housing and economic investment. This will have a significant impact on development within Kirklees, and it is important to use this process to maximise the benefits for the borough across all future opportunities, including but not limited to those linked to mass transit.

Funding from the Government's Social and Affordable Housing Programme is allocated to support the delivery of social homes in Kirklees. For example, in light of the Council's recent success in securing resources to build capacity in this area, with £300,000 awarded by Homes England and a further £240,000 allocated from

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the Homes and Neighbourhoods Housing Revenue Account, the Council will be well placed to deliver social and affordable housing at scale across the borough.

Elaine Orme, Mass Transit and Rail Project Manager informed the Panel that work is progressing at significant pace to ensure alignment with Combined Authority partners across the region as the Development Plan Document is taken forward. The work remains in its early phases and involves a substantial amount of technical activity. The current consultation will help shape the future content of the document, with further consultations to follow at Regulation 18 and 19 stages on the draft Development Plan Document before it goes to examination.

The Panel was informed that the document demonstrates the Council's commitment to supporting the region's ambition for a future mass transit system. It is anticipated that, over time, it will become a valuable planning tool to help decision-makers attract investment into the district. Should the Council decide to progress further development plan documents relating to potential routes or alignment options for mass transit connections into the district, this would be the foundational document required to shape that work. This reflects the current position.

In terms of the consultation process, the intention is to commence consultation on Thursday, 29 January, for the statutory minimum period of six weeks, in line with the requirements set out in the Council's Statement of Community Involvement. This is the standard requirement for all Development Plan Documents. The consultation period will conclude on 12 March, completing the full six-week timeframe.

Work will then be undertaken with district partners between March and June to review the feedback received during the Regulation 18 consultation. Preparation will then progress towards a Regulation 19 consultation in August, which will present the full suite of proposed policies. Submission of the Local Plan for examination is anticipated in October, with adoption expected in spring 2027.

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

- The information provided in the consultation materials is too vague and the maps are also vague. While there may be valid reasons for this, how can the public be expected to provide meaningful comment on this?
- How will guiding spatial planning principles maximise the benefits of the investment, what are the benefits and what are the guiding principles?
- The report mentions that a new public transport option provides an alternative to car travel, but does not state what it is?
- It is not clear how this document relates to local plans and what if there is a contradiction between the two?
- How can land be safeguarded within the Local Plan if a route has not yet been identified, or has a route already been considered?

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- With regard to joint DPD objectives there is a link between housing, the built heritage, the transport network and even the environment implications, however the link to the economic benefit is quite weak?

### **RESOLVED:**

That the Cabinet Member and Officers be thanked for providing an update on Mass Transit Spatial Development Framework Development Plan Document.