

Kirklees Council

Scrutiny lead member report - April 2018 (Including end of year report for 2017/18)

Lead Member: Rob Walker – Economy and Neighbourhoods Panel

Period of update : First report (18 Sept to 27 Nov 2017). Second report (28 Nov 2017 to 26 Feb 2018). Third report (27 Feb to 3 April 2018)

Panel Highlights

(a). Recap - Summary of the things which we included in the previous reports

4 Oct – First Panel meeting - Agreement that the topics to consider and prioritise were:-

1. Housing
2. Transport
3. Towns and communities

7 Nov – Second Panel meeting – Housing issues - Presentation on state of nation in Kirklees.

14 Dec – Third Panel meeting – The demand for and supply of supported housing in Kirklees.

(NOTE:- Late Jan 2018 – Provided opportunity for members of the Panel to visit the extra care housing schemes at Sandymount, Crosland Moor and Meadow Green and Meadow Green Lodge, Heckmondwike (Cllrs Judith Hughes and Rob Walker participated in the visits)

18 Jan – Fourth Panel meeting – Presentation and good cross party discussion on the key issues facing the development of the transport links in Kirklees and West Yorkshire, focusing in particular on our local rail links. The Panel followed up on this discussion at its meeting on 15 March 2018. Further details provided below.

15 Feb – Fifth Panel meeting – Presentation and discussion on the key issues facing the development of the key transport links in Kirklees and West Yorkshire, focusing in particular on our local road links.

(NOTE:- At the close of the formal meeting, we also held a “Housing Reference Group” with members and officers to discuss (i) Homelessness and rough sleeping, and (ii) how to progress the interest and work in extra care housing)

19 Feb - Economy Portfolio Briefing meeting – Met with Cllrs McBride and Mather, plus Karl Battersby, the new Strategic Director for Economy and Infrastructure, to discuss the work of the Panel to-date, plus potential items for the work programme in 2018/19.

(b). New things for this latest Lead Member report

15 Mar 2018 – Sixth Panel meeting - We used this Panel meeting for:-

1. Homelessness and rough sleeping in Kirklees - Discussed a really informative and useful briefing note on the co-ordination and range of services and work which the council and local agencies and groups in Kirklees do provide.

The topic was raised as an issue of concern by members of the panel in view of the severe weather in the period from December 2017 through to March 2018.

The outcome of the discussion was:-

- That the briefing note be shared with all councillors for information and reference
- Cllr Rob Walker and officers to follow up on the actions raised in the debate and, in particular, the work to establish and develop the work of those agencies involved in the “Rough sleeper outreach initiative” and Homelessness Forum.
- Councillors wanted more information, plus assurances, on the development of a local “Rough sleeper outreach initiative”, plus the work with community groups and volunteers, to help make sure that they and their colleagues are able and trained to deal appropriately with those vulnerable people who are homeless or sleeping rough.

2. Economy and neighbourhoods scrutiny panel in 2017/18 - Re-checked the work programme for 2017/18 – What had been achieved, which items would have to rollover to 2018/19 and potential new topics for 2018/19.

Members also explained how much they had enjoyed the meetings and work of the Panel in 2017/18

Outcomes associated with our work to-date:

Housing

- Raised awareness of the issues which members need to consider
- Highlighted concerns that planning approvals result in new housing, but it takes time
- Raised concerns about the availability of affordable housing – to buy or to rent
- Identification of a key issues for further attention e.g. provision of supported housing
- Proposed creation of housing reference group to consider a number of issues starting with the demand for and supply of more supported housing
- However, now feel that this topic, along with a number of other housing topics, should be picked up in a new cross party Housing Task Group (Naz Parkar)
- Raised awareness of the services for homeless people and rough sleepers, plus how the services and work in Kirklees compare to neighbouring authorities.

Transport

- Raised awareness and understanding of the key issues – rail and road links - which members and officers need to consider in 2018/19
- Transport for the North have agreed to hold a public consultation event in Kirklees on the development of its Strategic Transport Plan (A 30 year planning document)
- Informal and private meeting with Kieran Dunkin, Network Rail, on 15 March 2018, to discuss the recent announcements on the development of the trans pennine rail routes. All parties are keen to “stay in touch” as the plans, the opportunities and work start to develop from 2018/19 onwards

Monitoring Work

Details of the Q1 and Q2 reports were shared with members of the panel in Dec 2017, with news of the Q3 report shared with the Panel in Feb 2018.

End of year report and looking ahead to 2018/19

Firstly, I would like to thank all of the councillors and officers who have all contributed, honestly and openly, to the work of the Panel in 2017/18, plus the excellent discussions in the actual Panel meetings.

I think that we looked at some important topics, some of which will require further attention in 2018/19, as (i) we were never going to be able to deal with them in a couple of meetings, and (ii) as we ran out of time to get in the brief period from Sept 2017 to Mar 2018 to consider some of the issues in detail.

Looking ahead to the potential list of items for the work of the Panel in 2018/19, I would suggest that the shortlist include:-

1. Housing – Work on allocations policy and a new housing strategy
2. Towns and communities in Kirklees
3. Waste minimisation – Work on the new contract and a strategy for waste minimisation
4. Skills strategy for Kirklees
5. Work on a new economic strategy (including questions on social value and sustainable growth)

General comments

I'd really like to place on record my thanks to all of the members and officers that have contributed to the meetings and work of the Panel in 2018/19, plus the help and support which they have provided to me in my first year as a Panel lead member.