

Contact Officer: Steve Copley

KIRKLEES COUNCIL

ECONOMY AND NEIGHBOURHOODS SCRUTINY PANEL

Thursday 15th March 2018

Present: Councillor Rob Walker (Chair)
Councillor Martyn Bolt
Councillor Judith Hughes

Co-optees Mark Mercer

In attendance: Councillor Peter McBride
Councillor Eric Firth
Councillor Julie Stewart-Turner

Apologies: Councillor Darren O'Donovan
Councillor Cathy Scott

1 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the Panel meeting held on 15 February 2018, were presented and approved as a correct record.

Members also used this opportunity to discuss matters arising and to explain that:-

- Members of the Panel would still like more information on the demand for and use of the bus and rail links between Dewsbury, Huddersfield and Leeds, in order to consider the options that will provide passengers with the best service(s) and shortest journey times. Cllr Rob Walker agreed to follow up on this request with Keith Bloomfield, the Operations Manager for the West Yorkshire Transport Fund.

- Trans Pennine Express is still looking to update the timetables for its Trans Pennine routes. However, the plans for public consultation and meetings in March 2018 appear to have been delayed. Formal announcements on the next steps are still awaited.

- The Panel should also consider the work of the Kirklees District Consultation Sub Committee in 2018/19 and the consultation exercise which takes place on changes to local bus and rail services. Cllr Rob Walker agreed to follow up on this.

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- The news that Kieran Dunkin, Network Rail, is available to meet with the Panel, on an informal basis, at the close of today's Panel meeting (15 March 2018) to discuss announcements on the investment in the Trans Pennine rail upgrade scheme (TRU).

- The good news that Transport for the North (TfN) has agreed to hold a public consultation event in Kirklees about their Strategic Transport Plan. However, councillors and officers need to encourage colleagues and members of the public to attend the event to make representations on behalf of Kirklees and its wards.

2 Membership of the Committee

Apologies for absence were noted on behalf of Cllrs Darren O'Donovan and Cathy Scott (Invitee for item 5 below)

3 Interests

No interests were declared.

4 Admission of the Public

The meeting was held in public session

5 Homelessness and rough sleeping in Kirklees

The Panel welcomed the following officers to the meeting:-

- Helen Geldart – Head of Housing Services
- Cath McGurk – Operations Manager (Access to Housing)
- Naz Parkar – Service Director for Housing

Helen Geldart and Cath McGurk introduced a briefing note which provided information on the work of the council and other local agencies and groups in dealing with homelessness and rough sleeping in Kirklees.

The briefing noted provided detailed information on:-:-

- The definition(s) of homelessness
- Kirklees figures on the receipt and acceptance of homelessness cases in the period from 2015/16 to 2017/18
- How these figures compare with other local authorities in West Yorkshire, along with other national and regional average indicators
- The three main causes of homelessness, namely (i) the end of assured shorthold tenancies, (ii) violent breakdown of relationships involving a partner, and (iii) parents no longer willing to accommodate their children.
- The key changes within the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, which will be implemented on 3 April 2018.

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- Changes to our housing allocations policy to meet the new duties within the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- Statistics on the number of rough sleepers in Kirklees in the period from 2010 to 2017
- The use of the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP), which during very cold weather, is triggered to allow rough sleepers to access an emergency bed for the night (without the need for a comprehensive homelessness assessment)
- The development of a local “Rough sleeper outreach initiative” to try to improve upon the co-ordination of the help and assistance which several community, faith and volunteer groups already provide to people living out on the streets in Kirklees
- Plans to create a sub group of the local Homelessness Forum – starting with an initial workshop for a wide variety of outreach groups in March 2018 – to share ideas, information and best practice.
- The key contact details for these groups and services if anyone is concerned, at any time, about someone who may be sleeping rough in Kirklees.

(NOTE:-The actual presentation, plus webcast of the discussion which took place during the meeting, is available via the Kirklees website)

In summary, the discussion and questions went on to focus on:-

- Why the figures for Kirklees compare favourably to other local authorities because of the investment in an approach which promotes prevention as well as intervention.
- A request for more information from officers on the age profile and number of homeless people and rough sleepers, including, in particular, how many may have been in the care of the council, or who are former members of the armed services
- How the implementation and impact of the transition to “Universal Credit” may result in an increased number of homeless people. Cllr Rob Walker agreed to follow up on this with the Tackling Poverty Working Group, and possibly a debate at a Council meeting.
- A request for officers to provide all councillors with some appropriate contact details to allow them to refer cases involving domestic violence to the appropriate agencies at any time.
- Opportunities to work with other agencies, including schools, to help raise awareness of what can be done to help homeless people and rough sleepers
- Considering new opportunities to provide services in different ways e.g. providing accommodation, food and help closer to those spots in the town centres which the homeless and rough sleepers are known to frequent.

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- The need for more information on the development of a local “Rough sleeper outreach initiative” and the work of the Homelessness Forum, plus the work with community groups and volunteers, to help make sure that they and their colleagues are all able and trained to deal appropriately with those vulnerable people who are homeless or sleeping rough. (Councillors are keen to ensure that questions over safeguarding issues are considered and addressed)

RESOLVED:-

(1). That Helen Geldart, Cath McGurk and Naz Parkar be thanked for their attendance at today’s meeting

(2). That the briefing note used in today’s meeting be shared with all councillors for information and reference

(3). That Cllr Rob Walker and officers be asked to follow up on the actions raised in today’s debate and, in particular, the work to establish and develop the work of those agencies involved in the “Rough sleeper outreach initiative” and the Homelessness Forum. Plus, news on the outcome of a preliminary meeting with the voluntary groups to be shared with members of the Panel in due course.

6

Work programme

Steve Copley introduced an updated copy of the work programme for 2017/18, which provided:-

- A brief recap of the topics considered by the Panel at its six meetings in 2017/18
- A reminder of the topics which had not been started and which may rollover to 2018/19, and
- A longlist of the potential new topics for the Panel in 2018/19.

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

Cllr Rob Walker also offered his thanks to councillors and officers for their contributions and support for the meetings in 2017/18.

RESOLVED: - Members of the Panel went on to agree that:-

(1). The progress report on the development of the work programme in 2017/18 be noted.

(2). Members and officers be thanked for their contributions and support for the meetings of the panel in 2017/18.

7 Corporate performance reports for 2017/18

Steve Copley explained that the quarter 3 performance monitoring report had been considered by the Cabinet on 20 February 2018.

Copies of the same report would be circulated direct to members of this panel, to allow members to submit any specific comments and/or questions to Cllr Rob Walker and Steve Copley, who will follow up on these with the appropriate officers.

Cllr Julie Stewart Turner also reported on a discussion on a proposal, at the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on 12 March 2018, which would see the content and presentation of subsequent monitoring reports being developed and tailored to help inform the work programmes of each of the scrutiny panels in 2018/19.

RESOLVED: - That the quarter 3 performance monitoring report be circulated direct to members of this panel, to allow members to submit any comments and/or questions to Cllr Rob Walker and Steve Copley who will then follow up on these with the appropriate officers.