

Contact Officer: Alaina McGlade

KIRKLEES COUNCIL

CORPORATE SCRUTINY PANEL

Thursday 11th October 2018

Present: Councillor Gulfam Asif (Chair)
Councillor Marielle O'Neill
Councillor John Taylor

Co-optees Linda Summers

In attendance: Cllr Graham Turner, Portfolio Lead for Corporate
Eamonn Croston, Service Director - Finance, IT and
Transactional Services
Rachel Spencer-Henshall, Strategic Director – Corporate
Strategy & Public Health
Deborah Lucas, Head of People's Services
Alison Monkhouse, Principal Strategic Liaison Officer
Diane Chapman, Registration & Customer Service
Centres Manager

Apologies: Councillor James Homewood
Councillor Hilary Richards
Philip Chaloner (Co-Optee)

1 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

That the minutes of the meeting held on 31 August 2018 be approved as a correct record.

2 Interests

No interests were declared.

3 Admission of the Public

It was agreed that all agenda items be considered in public.

4 Further review of MTFP - headline assumptions / financial resilience / budget risk

Eamonn Croston, Service Director for Finance, IT and Transactional Services, presented a report which provided a high level overview of the Council's budget strategy update report. He explained that the report had already been considered and debated by Cabinet on 2nd October 2018 and Council on 10th October 2018.

Eamonn updated the Panel on the decision from Council on the previous evening, advising that Council had endorsed the report with no amendments so there were no verbal alterations to be made to the report.

Corporate Scrutiny Panel - 11 October 2018

Eamonn explained that the annual re-fresh of the medium term financial plan (MTFP) is a key component of the annual planning cycle. He explained, in summary, that the process included reviewing existing plans, using local and national intelligence to review these plans, looking forward to future funding and spending forecasts and pulling all of this together to estimate a figure based on the current working assumptions. He advised that this in turn will inform consideration of budget proposals through the remainder of the budget round, to deliver the 'balanced budget' that aligns with corporate priorities.

Eamonn summarised the report with emphasis on the primary considerations for the Panel in relation to reviewing the assumptions, considering the rationale behind the reserves policy including how this aligned with the national picture and reviewing the content of the sensitivity analysis.

Cllr Taylor commended Eamonn and his team for the work that had been undertaken in producing the report. He advised that, with the continued uncertainty on the national funding landscape for local government and considering the current backdrop of post-Brexit uncertainty, he was impressed with the level of detail contained within the reports.

Key points from the Panel discussion and responses to Member questions are summarised below:-

- It was highlighted that the most significant underlying pressure was against Special Educational Needs and Disabilities activity within Learning and Skills and the Panel questioned what the response had been to deal with this pressure. Eamonn explained that the pressure had been building for some time but had been self-contained within the dedicated school grant. He advised that the pressures have continued and increased and flexibility between budgets was now not enough to deal with the growing pressure. He explained that there was national recognition on the increasing pressures to High Needs funding. There is additional funding being released from the government but this funding would not be released in one block so the council will need to revise the budget by approximately £7m (including the additional funding from government). It was also explained that officers would be looking at evidence based solutions over the next 3 months, especially relating to sufficiency and out of area specialist placements. Cllr Turner added that invest to save programmes were being investigated to help the budget situation but also to ensure the Council can contribute to what is best for the local children;
- The Panel highlighted their satisfaction that early recognition of pressures was now incorporated within the budget process;
- The Panel noted that the budget assumption of 700 new houses to be built each year did not align with the Council's aspirations outlined within the Corporate Plan and questioned whether the assumptions should be more ambitious. They also highlighted that from an external perspective, the Council needed to appear consistent. Eamonn explained that the assumptions would be reviewed as the quarterly financial monitoring took

Corporate Scrutiny Panel - 11 October 2018

place but that assumptions remained prudent pending the adoption of the Local Plan. He acknowledged that an explanation behind the inconsistencies between reports would be helpful.

- The Panel further questioned whether the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) would have an impact on the number of houses built. Eamonn advised that it was still early days in relation to the collection fund and advised that the core assumptions would be monitored throughout the quarters.
- The Panel highlighted that as more houses are built, especially in rural areas, this would impact upon the school transport budget. They recommended that, alongside the recognised budget considerations, thought also be given in relation to annual property growth.
- The Panel requested that the renewal of the Waste Strategy be clearly outlined within the budget risks category as they felt it was unlikely that the Council would receive a deal that was as beneficial as the current agreement is.
- The Panel felt that the Capital Plan had an ambitious assumption in relation to the timescale of the Town Centre Regeneration project. They questioned whether some slippage should be added to the assumption especially in light of the timescales in relation to the permissions required for the project to progress. Eamonn acknowledged that the project was based on older plans and advised that there was currently a review ongoing. He advised that the outcome of the review may impact on financial procedures and processes and agreement may be required from Members to amend procedure rules.
- The Panel questioned whether the indications around the supposed “extreme winter conditions” and the impact this will have on the Winter Policy had been considered. Eamonn advised that a rigorous review of the service was being undertaken as the summer months had also been classed as adverse weather conditions.

RESOLVED – That:

- (1) Eamonn Croston, Service Director for Finance, IT and Transactional Services be thanked for attending the meeting and that thanks for the comprehensive report provided be extended to the finance team and corporate colleagues;
- (2) the Panel recommend the difference between the aspirational figures for housing growth within the Corporate Plan and those set out in the base line budget assumptions for council tax revenue be clearly explained in narrative within the relevant documents;
- (3) the Panel recommend the narrative relating to the review of the Waste Strategy within the Corporate Risk Register be amended to clearly outline the potential risks to the organisation;

(4) the Panel expressed their support for necessary amendments to Financial Procedure Rules to be made, to avoid unnecessary delays to the Town Centre Regeneration Project.

5 People Strategy

The Panel received an update from Deborah Lucas, Head of People Services, on the progress being made in relation to the development strand of the Council's Peoples' Strategy.

It was explained that the strategy was being driven by People Services, with regular monitoring and governance through the Modern Organisation Board.

Deborah provided an overview on the three key strategic themes; Attraction, Development and Wellbeing, and explained that eight work streams sat behind the themes in order to deliver the overall strategy. She advised that the key priority moving forward was to establish the governance procedures for the strategy and strengthen its delivery in order to demonstrate outcomes achieved.

Deborah moved on to provide a high level overview of the key activity taking place within the development work stream:

- Developing Emotional Intelligence
 - In house workshops developed and piloted
- Establishing the Council as a Coaching Organisation
 - Maximising on current coaches and communicating the offer through an intranet page
 - Made links with other Local Authorities and the NHS to support each other and developed offer for third sector organisations
- Inclusion and Diversity
 - The Council has joined the Inclusive Diversion Network
 - Daily challenges for staff as part of National Inclusion week
 - E-learning modules
- Learning Offer
 - Working with employee networks on a Trading Offer to enable shadowing across the Council
 - Leadership and Management development through the three stages of the Horizons framework
 - Procurement exercise to select a training provider to develop our Leadership Management with 30 employees currently working towards a Level 3 qualification
 - First level pilot on a Level 5 Leadership qualification
- Apprenticeships
 - Progressing well against the public sector target for the number of apprenticeships over the next 4 years
 - Working to establish outreach programmes and developing the "Saturday jobs" initiative for care leavers

Corporate Scrutiny Panel - 11 October 2018

Deborah moved on to provide a summary of the performance work stream, with a particular emphasis on performance management as the developments in this area linked closely with the development of employees. She advised that the Council had acknowledged that performance management was not working as well as it should so an in depth piece of work had been undertaken to review the Council's current annual appraisal process. The outcome was that both managers and employees agreed that the current approach was not effective and as such, a set of corporate priorities would be developed, with services being able to take these principles and design their own personalised approach to meet the needs of that service. She also advised that a performance dashboard of the key indicators in relation to performance management was being provided to the Executive Team on a regular basis to give them a flavour of the current picture of the workforce.

Deborah moved on to briefly touch upon the key areas of progress in relation to the talent attraction work stream. She advised that an employee recognition scheme had been developed and would be rolled out within the next month. A workforce planning toolkit had also been developed and the employee healthcare offer had been turned around to focus on early intervention and prevention rather than being used following a return from a period of sick leave.

Key points from the Panel discussion and responses to Member questions are summarised below:-

- Members advised they were not aware of Inclusion Week and requested future involvement with councillors. They also commended the introduction of an employee recognition scheme but again requested that councillors be involved within the nomination process due to being at the receiving end of customer service from employees of the Council.
- Members highlighted the risk of isolation and dislocation of employees as the move to a streamlined, place based working arrangement was embedded and felt an acknowledgement of this should be included within the wellbeing work stream to outline the support that is available.
- The Panel requested that the good practices communicated within this meeting, be regularly communicated to the public, especially in light of mental health day and recommended the Council to look for opportunities to highlight the good practice taking place.
- Support towards the performance dashboard data being collected and reviewed was highlighted and questioned whether the Panel would be able to review this data.
- Support towards a move to regular performance management discussions was highlighted.
- Questions were raised around the induction process and whether there was a corporate induction process, applicable to all staff. Alison Monkhouse advised that this was another area that was currently being investigated and was not at solution stage yet; however she did explain that an investigation

Corporate Scrutiny Panel - 11 October 2018

into how staff feel about the current process and how the process could be expanded to include updates to staff when they return from lengthy leave or move service areas was currently being undertaken.

- A question regarding talent attraction and the age of the workforce was raised and Deborah explained that intelligence shows that the Council has an aging workforce. She acknowledged that through the reduction of employee numbers in the Council, some long standing, experienced members of staff had left, however the focus for the Council had been on attracting younger people to the workforce. Rachel Spencer-Henshall explained that a key priority was to retain the organisational memory whilst encouraging a new younger workforce.

RESOLVED – That:

(1) Deborah Lucas, Head of Peoples Services, Alison Monkhouse, Principal Strategic Liaison Officer and Diane Chapman, Registration and Customer Service Centres Manager be thanked for attending the meeting;

(2) The Panel recommend that councillors be involved in the monthly recognition scheme for employees and are able to put forward nominations, given that they at the receiving end of customer service from employees of the council;

(3) The Panel would regularly receive a copy of the organisation's performance dashboard;

(4) A further update on the Attraction and Wellbeing strands of the People's Strategy be scheduled within the Corporate Scrutiny Panel's Work Programme for 2018/19.

6 Work Programme for 2018/19

That the work programme and agenda plan presented for the Corporate Scrutiny Panel for 2018/19 be noted and agreed.

7 Future Meeting Dates

That the future meeting dates for the Corporate Scrutiny Panel for 2018/19 be noted.