



**Name of meeting:** Corporate Scrutiny Panel

**Date:** Thursday 29 November 2018

**Title of report:** Kirklees Democracy Commission - Update

**Purpose of report**

To update the Corporate Scrutiny Panel on the work of the Kirklees Democracy and in particular progress since the last update on 19 April 2018.

<b>Key Decision - Is it likely to result in spending or saving £250k or more, or to have a significant effect on two or more electoral wards?</b>	Not applicable
<b>Key Decision - Is it in the <a href="#">Council's Forward Plan (key decisions and private reports?)</a></b>	Not applicable
<b>The Decision - Is it eligible for call in by Scrutiny?</b>	Not applicable
<b>Date signed off by <a href="#">Strategic Director</a> &amp; name</b>  <b>Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Finance IT and Transactional Services?</b>  <b>Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Legal Governance and Commissioning Support?</b>	Rachel Spencer Henshall, Director of Corporate Strategy and Public Health
<b>Cabinet member <a href="#">portfolio</a></b>	Councillor Cathy Scott

**Electoral wards affected:** All

**Ward councillors consulted:** All ward councillors have had the opportunity to consider the Commission's report and recommendations at the extraordinary meeting of Full Council on 10 May 2017 and at the Council meeting on 15 November 2017.

**Public or private:** Public

## 1. Summary

The [Kirklees Democracy Commission](#) has now reported its [findings](#). The Commission's work has received significant national profile. The ground breaking draft report, containing 48 recommendations, was discussed at Council on 10 May 2017, was launched on 30 June 2017 and finally agreed by Council on 15 November 2017.

In agreeing the report on 15 November 2017 Council agreed that a cross party working group should be established to oversee the delivery of future work. The first meeting took place on 2 March 2018 and has been meeting on a monthly basis since then.

Corporate Panel now has the opportunity to consider the progress since 19 April 2018 from an Overview and Scrutiny perspective and begin to explore the ways in which further contributions can be made to the next phases of the work.

## 2. Information

At the first meeting of the Cross Party Working Group on 2 March 2018 members considered and agreed the priority recommendations that should provide the focus of early work (attached at Appendix I). Since that initial meeting the Working Group have been systematically working through those recommendations. This has involved considering a series of officer proposals, captured in a project mandate, and thereafter commissioning work. A high level summary of the work commissioned so far is set out below, with hyperlinks to the source reports where available:

- [The Changing Councillor Role and How it is Supported](#) – The Working Group has commissioned two separate pieces of work as part of this project. One area involves revisiting the role of the Kirklees councillor in light of the Commission's findings. So far this has involved holding a workshop with a cross section of middle managers to begin to understand the changing role from an officer perspective. Further sessions will take place with citizens and councillors. The outcomes of such work will result in the production of a new role profile for Kirklees councillors.

The other part of the project involves looking at how councillors can be supported differently and better as part of carrying out their Ward role. So far this has involved a number of Ward based conversations (ongoing) and considering practice from neighbouring authorities. The outcome of this work will inform the redesign of how we support councillors moving forward. Councillor Scott and Councillor Taylor are leading on this piece of work on behalf of the Working Group;

- [Developing a Citizen Engagement Framework](#) and [Place Based Working](#) – An important strand of the Commission's work related developing Active Citizens as a strategic priority. This has involved agreeing a framework for citizen engagement whereby the council will move away from more traditional approaches to consultation and towards genuine engagement and dialogue with

citizens based on local identity and the places where they live, work and visit. The Working Group has set this work in the wider context of the council's developing approach to place based working and has endorsed the use of a tool called the [Place Standard](#) as the principal method for carrying out place based engagement moving forward. Similarly an approach to civic crowd funding is now being developed by the Democracy Service to sit alongside the use of the Place Standard. More information on the Standard and civic crowd funding can be provided at the meeting;

- [Improving Electoral Registration](#) – The Working Group has commissioned work intended to have a proactive and positive effect on electoral registration. So for this has involved widening out our electoral outreach offer to integrate student Huddersfield University registration with electoral registration. The outcomes of this work are currently being evaluated following the first cohort of new students registering in the autumn of this year. This project is also concerned with developing a local approach to exploring the registration of young people at the age of 16. Pilot work is currently taking place with one high school which will begin in the New Year with a view to widening out the offer to other interested schools. The pilot will be evaluated and the findings presented back to the Working Group before determining next steps;
- [Putting Councillors at the Heart of the Organisation](#) – An important theme running through much of the Commission's findings related to the importance of officers and councillors working together effectively and the extent to which this relationship needed to improve. Significant work has taken place, via officer and councillor workshops, to understand the current situation and make practical recommendations to develop a shared understanding of each other's roles and create more opportunities for officers (at all levels) and councillors to work together. The proposal have been captured in a [communications and engagement approach](#) which was launched in Local Democracy Week;
- [Networked Councillors - Digital Skills, Confidence and Content for Civic Good](#) – An important part of the Commission's worked involved looking at the opportunities for local democracy in a digital society. The Working Group agreed a project proposal which would have four phases to its work:
  - *[Understanding what we have and what we need](#)* will involve exploring the current status of local networks, councillors' current use of digital technologies, and attitudes towards developing skills, confidence and content. An audit of current activity will be produced;
  - *[Working with citizens to develop our democratic content](#)* will involve bringing together a group of citizens interested in working with the working group to improve democratic content;
  - *[Piloting different ways of learning and collaborating](#)* will involve testing different ways of learning digital skills, which would be a benefit for both councillors and citizens. Activities would be outcome focused and involve informal learning, peer to peer learning and networking where possible. A number of practical pilots will be developed in response to identifying the needs;

- *Creating new tools and approaches* will involve learning from initial research and ongoing work with citizens and pilots, to develop useful tools and approaches. Products would include contents guidelines, a live social media audit, and learning options for councillors. Councillor Cooper and Councillor Walker are leading on this piece of work on behalf of the Working Group;
- [Regional Devolution – Supporting Our Councillors and Citizens](#) – The Working Group has commissioned work that is intended to provide information and support intended to improve the understanding and engagement of both councillors and citizens in the wider work taking place in the region. This work includes the development of a number of communication and briefing arrangements which takes information provided by the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) and sharing it in a way that is more timely and engaging. This includes:
  - Monthly discussion at Leadership Management Team;
  - Quarterly discussion at the Cross Party Regional Engagement Group and working briefings for key meetings;
  - Briefings for councillors who represent Kirklees on various regional bodies, including those not on the Cabinet;
  - WYCA rolling out a district specific newsletter, on a monthly basis, to detail programmes of activity;
  - The information flow to citizens was supported by the council's communications team and WYCA, with weekly communications planning meetings and a shared programme of messaging. A communication plan for the devolution agenda is under development.
- [Opening Up Our Meetings](#) – As part of our ongoing work to improve our democratic content, officers have begun some focussed work around opening up our meetings, which will continue throughout the municipal year. In addition to this work the Working Group has commissioned work to respond to citizens who have said “We can’t get involved if we don’t understand how things work”. With this in mind, the Working Group are taking an iterative approach to breaking things down into bitesize information. Types of content that is being developed includes:
  - Helping citizens to understand meetings: How things work, what's happening and how to get involved;
  - Sharing the experiences of councillors, citizens and staff;
  - Explaining issues that we're making decisions about.

Initial work has involved looking at the format of Council meetings from the perspective of our citizens, thinking about all the elements of these meetings that citizens might not understand. We are then testing out approaches to explaining elements of these meetings. This began with a very broad video introduction to Council, describing the format of an agenda, who is in the room, and ways of participating in the meeting.

Further work has taken place to map out ideas for future content about Council meetings, and officers have begun to look at other meetings such as Cabinet

and Scrutiny. Over time, we will generate a collection of materials that can be shared as and when relevant (as well as being accessible online any time). Together these materials will help our citizens to understand how local decision making works and will encourage participation.

- [Recommendations for External Organisations](#) – A number of the Commission's recommendations cover areas that are outside of the control of the Council. A series of letters covering these issues have been drafted on behalf of the Working Group and shared with external agencies and government departments. We are awaiting responses to those letters.

At the time of producing this paper further officer proposals will be submitted to the Working Group meeting on 28 November looking at Civic Pathways for Young people and Democratic Content and Public Awareness. A verbal update with regards to these two areas of work will be provided at the meeting.

In the context of the above it will be helpful to explore in more detail the ways in which Overview and Scrutiny can proactively inform and contribute to specific pieces of work as they are planned and progressed.

### **3. Implications for the Council**

#### **3.1 Early Intervention and Prevention (EIP)**

The focus on a citizen-led approach, in the context of the Active Citizen, has the potential to contribute to the delivery of EIP outcomes.

#### **3.2 Economic Resilience (ER)**

The focus on the notion "Business Citizenship", in the context of Active Citizens, has the potential to contribute to the delivery of ER outcomes

#### **3.3 Improving Outcomes for Children**

The focus on civic pathways for young citizens has the potential to contribute to improving outcomes for children.

#### **3.4 Reducing demand of services**

To be determined following the outcome of future discussions in the context of the Cross Party Working Group's priorities.

#### **3.5 Other (eg Legal/Financial or Human Resources)**

To be determined following the outcome of ongoing discussions in the context of the Cross Party Working Group's priorities.

### **4. Consultees and their opinions**

The following have been consulted on the approach set out in this report and endorse it as a way forward:

- The Director of Corporate Strategy and Public Health;

- Cllr Cathy Scott, Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Democracy Commission.

## **5. Next steps**

In line with the Commission's expectations the Head of Democracy will have strategic responsibility for progressing work required to deliver the intended outcomes and underpinning recommendations. Now that there is a clear sense of priority as to specific recommendations programme management will ensure that the main focus of activity is ensuring that respective projects are progressing.

## **6. Officer recommendations and reasons**

Corporate Scrutiny Panel is asked to:

- Consider and note the information set out in this report;
- Consider the progress made against priority recommendations and in particular inform their development from a scrutiny perspective;
- Consider the implication for Overview and Scrutiny now that the Working Group has identified a suite of priority recommendations to progress and has commissioned projects to deliver against them.

## **7. Cabinet portfolio holder's recommendations**

That Corporate Scrutiny Panel agrees the officer recommendation.

## **8. Contact officer**

Carl Whistlecraft. Head of Democracy  
[Carl.whistlecraft@kirklees.gov.uk](mailto:Carl.whistlecraft@kirklees.gov.uk)

## **9. Background Papers and History of Decisions**

All background information on the Commission's work (including formal reports, background papers, evidence and research) can be found on the [Commission's website](#).

## **10. Strategic Director responsible**

Rachel Spencer Henshall, Director of Corporate Strategy and Public Health

## Appendix 1



### **Priority Recommendations as Identified by the Cross-Party Working Group on Friday 2 March 2018:**

#### Active Citizens:

- Kirklees Council should make Active Citizenship a shared strategic priority and use this as a basis for developing a new democratic relationship between Kirklees citizens and the state.
- Kirklees Council should ensure that schools play a central role as local democratic hubs as part of the delivery of an Active Citizens Strategy. This should involve designing (and putting into practice) a range of approaches which will create pathways for young citizens to become involved in civic society, including raising awareness about being a councillor. These could include:
  - Designing local democracy resources for Kirklees schools to be used in the context of civic education.
  - Strengthening the links between local councillors and the schools in their wards through programmed “school surgeries” as part of citizenship education.
  - Working with the National Citizen Service to develop a mentoring scheme, to be piloted in Kirklees.
  - Working with the Local Government Association (LGA) to develop a young councillors “apprenticeship” scheme, to be piloted in Kirklees.
  - Working with the University of Huddersfield and local colleges to develop a structured approach to work placement.
  - Developing a mentoring scheme between Kirklees Councillors and Kirklees Youth Councillors.

#### Governance and Decision Making:

- Kirklees Council should carry out a full review of our governance and decision making arrangements. The review should be based on the issues and core design principles that are set out in the report.
- Kirklees Council should revisit our approach to consultation. We should place a greater emphasis on appropriate, timely citizen engagement as part of the policy



development and decision-making process. We should test this on a pilot basis to begin with, and consider models of good practice from elsewhere.

- Kirklees Council should develop online and off-line interpretive information for the public relating to all of our public meetings. Such information can be used at meetings but can also be part of wider civic awareness about the council and our democratic processes.
- Kirklees Council should review our approach to creating and sharing democratic content. This should involve exploring different and innovative ways of developing content to facilitate dialogue and engagement before, during and after the formal decision-making process.

#### Regional Devolution:

- Kirklees Council should review and improve the ways in which we support senior councillors to carry out their role in the context of the wider region. This should involve improving the information flow, in both directions, between the City Region and local areas. We should also make sure that all our councillors receive timely information about the wider regional devolution agenda.
- Kirklees Council should engage with local citizens to address the issue of local identity. Local devolution and governance are an ongoing challenge. We should be clearer about our local identity so that we can make a strong and powerful contribution to regional discussions.
- Kirklees Council should develop local approaches to strategic planning and priority setting (within different parts of Kirklees), based on the findings of our engagement work with citizens on local identity.

#### Councillors:

- Kirklees Council should use the evidence gathered by the Democracy Commission to re-define the role profile for Kirklees councillors, so that this reflects the changing and long term expectations and needs of the role. The revised profile should include core expectations, linked to ongoing performance. These should be used to demonstrate the impact that councillors are having, particularly in their wards.
- Kirklees Council should redesign support for councillors in a way that has a greater focus on their wards. This should enable councillors to provide better support for communities in developing effective facilities, programmes and social networks to improve people's quality of life.
- Kirklees Council should make performance evidence about what councillors do available to the public, in an easy-to-digest format.
- Kirklees Council should support all our councillors to understand and embrace digital technology. Digital literacy should be a core expectation of the councillor role. It should be part of new councillor induction and councillor development, so that we support councillors in developing their digital skills and confidence, and



enable them to play an active part in explaining our decision-making processes to our citizens. Commission members should pilot this approach.