Kirklees COUNCIL

Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report

2024/25

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Chair's Foreword

I am pleased to introduce the Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee for 2024–25. This report outlines a year of constructive and wide-ranging scrutiny, during which the Committee and Panels have continued to play a key role in supporting open, accountable, and evidence-based decision-making across Kirklees Council.

This year, we have delivered a comprehensive programme of work, providing oversight on core corporate issues such as finance, performance, and risk. We scrutinised all three quarterly Corporate Financial Monitoring Reports and provided detailed feedback on the draft 2025/26 budget, with recommendations that emphasised clarity, local impact, and early engagement with scrutiny. We also considered the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and provided challenge on strategic alignment, resilience, and community enablement.

Our pre-decision scrutiny has helped shape major Council plans and policies, including the Council Plan 2025/26, the Inclusion and Diversity Strategy, the Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan, and the emerging Tourism Strategy. In each case, the Committee sought to ensure these strategies are forward-looking, inclusive, and responsive to local needs.

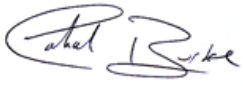
We received progress updates on the Corporate Safeguarding Policy and were pleased to see the impact of the Safeguarding Champion initiative. Our work on social connectivity led to a detailed action plan being produced in response to our recommendations—an example of scrutiny influencing positive change on the ground.

Importantly, we undertook a visit to the Employee Health Care Service as part of our ongoing interest in workforce wellbeing and the People Strategy. This provided valuable insight into service delivery and staff support. A visit to the Huddersfield Customer Service Centre is also planned, to support our scrutiny of the integration of library and customer services. We anticipate arranging further visits throughout the year, where these can enhance our understanding and help inform our work.

We also maintained oversight of the Council's work on external funding and partnership development, encouraging a 'think funding' approach across scrutiny panels. In May 2025, we welcomed an update on the Council's work to support veterans and their families through the Armed Forces Covenant, reflecting our ongoing commitment to inclusive service delivery.

This work would not be possible without the constructive relationships we enjoy with Cabinet members, officers, and our scrutiny colleagues. I extend my thanks to all Committee members on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the four Standing Scrutiny Panels for their dedication, and to the officers who support our work with professionalism and rigour.

Looking ahead, the Committee remains committed to strong, evidence-informed scrutiny that supports continuous improvement and ensures that the voices of Kirklees residents continue to shape the Council's priorities and services.



Councillor Cahal Burke

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee 2024/25

Committee Membership

Committee Membership
Councillor Cahal Burke
Councillor Itrat Ali
Councillor Zarina Amin
Councillor Andrew Cooper
Councillor Jo Lawson

Work Programme 2024/25

- Leader, Finance and Corporate Portfolio Holders' Priorities
- Financial Management of the Council including the Budget Proposals for 2025/26.
- Council Plan – Pre-Decision Scrutiny
- Crime and Disorder:
  - Communities Partnership Plan
  - Annual Refresh of the Strategic Impact Assessment
- Council Plan and Corporate Performance – Quarterly Reports
- Corporate Risk – Quarterly Reports
- Procurement – Overview of Implementation of the Procurement Act 2023
- Kirklees Armed Forces Covenant Progress Report
- People Strategy Update
- Corporate Safeguarding – Update on Implementation of Refreshed Policy
- Inclusion and Diversity Strategy 2024-27 Pre-Decision Scrutiny
- Scrutiny Final Report – Social Connectivity in Kirklees.
- Partnership Working and External Funding Opportunities.
- Tourism Strategy – Pre-Decision Scrutiny

In addition to the formal meetings of the Committee, informal sessions took place to facilitate pre-decision scrutiny in respect of the delivery model for the libraries and early engagement in relation to the action plan to respond to the recommendations made as a result of the LGA Peer Challenge in November 2024.

The Committee received briefing notes, on a regular basis, to assist Members in maintaining an overview of potential and forthcoming legislation and Government policy relevant to local government, with a view to consideration of any impact on the Council at an early stage.

The Chair of Scrutiny received briefings during 2024/25, from the Service Director – Finance and the Deputy Chief Executive and held regular meetings with the Leader and the Cabinet Members for the Finance and Corporate Portfolios.

Committee Highlights

Leader of Council, Corporate and Finance Portfolio Holders' Priorities

In September 2024, Councillor Carole Pattison, the Leader of Council and the Portfolio Holders for Finance, Councillor Graham Turner, and Corporate, Councillor Tyler Hawkins, were welcomed to the meeting to talk about their priorities for 2024/25 and to provide an update in respect of recent outcomes.

It was explained that the long-term vision, eight shared outcomes, and four partnership strategies remained the same. The vision was for a district that combined a strong, sustainable economy with a great quality of life leading to thriving communities, growing businesses, high prosperity and low inequality, where people enjoy better health throughout their lives. The priorities set out in the 2024/25 Council Plan would continue to be delivered:

- Address the financial position in a fair and balanced way.

- Strive to transform Council services to become more efficient, effective and modern.
- Continue to deliver a greener, healthier Kirklees and address the challenges of climate change.
- Continue to invest and regenerate our towns and villages to support our diverse places and communities to flourish.

The new areas of focus across all portfolios for 2024/2025 were:

- Getting the basics right; a modern organisation that meets residents' expectations.
- Being a responsible organisation that protects the vulnerable and drives sustainability.
- Working with partners to empower people to thrive, including through good local health services, education opportunities and housing.
- Driving local economic growth, particularly through the cultural sector, and making the most of opportunities through the Council's relationship with the Government and West Yorkshire Combined Authority.
- Working in a more collaborative and inclusive way.

They responded to questions and comments from the Committee in respect of the following aspects:

- How the Council measured if it was meeting residents' expectations.
- The employee networks and the support they provided to staff.
- Addressing issues for vulnerable residents in accessing the Council's online system.
- The cross-party working approach and the intention to extend this, including wider collaborative working with external organisations and the voluntary sector.
- Evaluation of the impact of capital investment throughout Kirklees.

Financial Monitoring – Budget proposals

In January 2025, the Committee held a meeting focused on the budget proposals for 2025/26 and the Council Plan, in advance of the consideration by the Cabinet and Council.

The Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive gave an introduction, which included:

- The approach to the development of the Council Plan alongside, and to align with, the Council's Budget for 2025/26.
- The extended consultation undertaken, with the aim of increasing engagement and transparency.
- The six budget principles:
    1. Set a balanced budget and maintain a prudent level of reserves.
    2. Maintain a focus on prevention and intervention to prevent longer term pressures.
    3. Safeguard regeneration to support longer term economic growth.
    4. Maximise income and seek new funding opportunities.
    5. Prioritise transformation to increase efficiency and effectiveness of service.
    6. Maintain appropriate risk and governance practices.
- An initial early analysis of the key themes arising from the public consultation on the budget proposals.

This was followed by a presentation by the Portfolio Holder for Finance and the Service Director for Finance which highlighted:

- The Local Government Financial Settlement final figures were anticipated to be received in early February. The indication of a move towards a fairer funding scheme and a multi-year settlement in the future was welcomed and would assist with longer term planning.
- The impact of rising demand and demographic/inflationary pressures, particularly in Adults and Children's Services.
- Headlines relating to the development of the budget for 2025/26, including the national context.
- The overall updated budget position for 2025/26 to achieve a balanced budget, including additional savings proposals of £11.4 million.

The Portfolio Holders and Executive Directors for Adults and Health, Children and Families, Place, including the Housing Revenue Account, and Public Health and Corporate Resources then detailed the key issues and key pressures affecting their work for 2025/26, the draft savings proposals for the year and the key borrowing for capital schemes.

At each stage, questions and comments were invited from Committee Members.

Outcomes:

The opportunity for pre-decision scrutiny of the proposals was welcomed and the comments below were reported to Cabinet in February 2025 and Council in March 2025:

- The improvements made in terms of the approach to pre-decision scrutiny in the last few years be welcomed and that it be recommended that engagement with scrutiny be undertaken at the earliest possible stage of decision-making or policy formulation.
- The proposals to support and assist communities to undertake activities and minimise barriers be welcomed.
- The importance of ward budgets, and, whilst recognising the need for monitoring, a review of the complexity of the governance arrangements would be welcomed.
- The importance of the principle of developing resilience in the approach to budget development.
- Consideration should be given to how the budget is presented, with the recommendation that additional detail should be provided for context and to help understanding of the impacts and risks associated with the key pressures and savings, and how they would be addressed.
- The improvements in children's services over the last ten years and the recent 'Good' Ofsted outcome was welcomed and that all those involved be thanked for their dedication and hard work in contributing to this.
- The important investment into early years and support and the efforts being made to reduce the numbers of out of area placements for children looked after is welcomed.

Figure 1 - OSMC meeting

Quarterly Monitoring and Medium-Term Financial Strategy

The Committee considered each of the quarterly corporate financial monitoring reports at meetings in September and December 2024 and April 2025.

Issues discussed included;

- Capacity within the organisation to achieve savings and take opportunities to generate new income.
- The tight control on recruitment, with posts that were essential for service delivery and income generation being released.
- The position in respect of the 'safety valve agreement', associated with the Dedicated Schools Grant deficit, and the engagement with the DfE on this issue.
- The allocation of funding associated with the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) scheme, to recognise the cost to the authority of the collection, management, recycling and disposal of packaging waste.
- The Council budgeted for a level of voids and turnover of housing stock and this was typically 1%, in line with other local authorities. Anything above the 1% target would result in a loss of income. There was regular communication with the relevant Portfolio Holder on how the number, and the length of time they were empty, could be reduced.
- For 2025/26, the decision had been taken to deal with the pressures by funding many of the overspends and it was therefore expected that the number of variations reported would be lower.
- In respect of the impact of the rise in Employer's National Insurance on health and social care budgets; the Executive Director for Adults and Health was currently in negotiation with care providers to agree fee uplift rates and these should reflect the money put in to help fund those cost increases. The impact would be clearer after the first quarter of 2025/26.

- Significant additional provision had been made for children's and adult social care in 2025/26, and the updated Medium Term Financial Plan would reflect the projections for the next 3 to 5 years when it was submitted to Cabinet in the Autumn. Each Directorate had its own specific savings plans, agreed as part of the budget, which would be tracked on quarterly basis, and tight controls would remain in place on spend and vacancy management in the first quarter.

In September 2024 the Committee received a presentation focussing on:

- The principles of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.
- The funding assumptions used in developing the strategy.
- Analysis of the anticipated budget gap for 2025-26 and the measures to be taken to address the gap.

It was explained that the Chancellor would present the budget on 30th October and this would provide an indication, at sector-wide level, which could impact on the figures. A provisional settlement would be provided by the Government in December 2024 and the final settlement in February 2025.

Outcomes

Ongoing engagement provided the Committee with a robust oversight of the corporate financial monitoring, facilitating Members to be aware of the current position and challenges and giving them the opportunity to put questions and offer challenge to the relevant Cabinet Member and Section 151 Officer. It provided Lead Members with important background information to be taken into account, as appropriate, when considering issues within the remit of their Panel.

Overview of risk and performance management

At meetings in September and December 2024 and April 2025 the Committee considered reports in respect of the quarterly corporate risk reports and performance management; progress against the 2024/25 Council Plan priorities and performance against the 2024/25 Council Key Measures.

Outcomes:

The ongoing engagement provided the Committee with an overview of these important areas and the actions and mitigations being taken in each case. Members were able to question and offer challenge to the relevant Cabinet Member and lead officers. Lead Members were able to use this knowledge to take forward any issues within the remit of their Panel that may require further scrutiny.

Examples of issues considered, with links to red and amber risks, and performance data are set out below:

<u>Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee</u>:

- Financial Management Monitoring, including the Capital Plan, and Medium-Term Financial Strategy
- People Strategy
- Procurement
- Community Cohesion, Wellbeing & Resilience

- Corporate Safeguarding

Children's Scrutiny Panel:

- SEND Provision
- Children's Safeguarding

Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Panel:

- Emergency Planning & Business Continuity
- Health & Safety
- Climate Change

Growth and Regeneration Scrutiny Panel:

- Housing Safety & Quality
- Homelessness and Housing Stock Availability

Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel:

- Adults Safeguarding

Inclusion and diversity strategy

In August, an early draft of the Inclusion and Diversity Strategy 2024-2027 was submitted for pre-decision consideration and comment.

The strategy set out the broad direction for inclusion and diversity and provided an overarching framework, with some of the specific actions and projects being picked up in other strategies such as the 'Peoples Strategy' and 'Access to Services Strategy'.

The Council Plan, set out three organisational values, kindness, inclusion and pride and the strategy set out three elements to respond to the commitment to inclusion:

- **Compliance:** with the Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010, and beyond.
- **Ambition:** to achieve the ambitions for inclusion as an organisational value. set against four themes, as set out below, which stemmed from the Local Government Association's Equality Framework. An overview of the objectives under each theme was provided:
    1. Understanding and working with our communities
    2. Leadership, partnership, and organisational development
    3. Responsive services and customer care
    4. Diverse and engaged workforce
- **Partnership:** to enable inclusion more broadly in Kirklees, as an anchor organisation, as a co-ordinator and facilitator, leading through partnerships, and as a service deliverer through services and programmes.

Outcomes

The strategy was approved by Cabinet on 10th September 2024 and the Committee's comments, and the response to its recommendations were reported as follows:

- More detail be provided on how performance and impact will be monitored and understood
- Reference should be made to the role of elected members and how they could contribute and add value in terms of delivery of the aims of the strategy
- That the data in the draft strategy be reviewed, to ensure we have considered and included the latest available data.

Following this feedback, further details on understanding performance and impact have been added to the 'delivery' section of the strategy. A review of the data and intelligence has also taken place, and all figures have been updated where newer data was found to be available. There are now clear references with the data, to provide assurance around this. This has not affected the priorities in the strategy. Finally, there is now an objective under 'understanding and working with communities' around working with ward councillors, referencing their roles as place leaders in enabling place-based responses to opportunities and challenges. How this is done in each place will differ and will be supported by the unique strengths and assets in each area.

Government policy/legislation horizon scanning

Members of the Committee were provided with a briefing note, at regular intervals, to give them an overview of potential legislative and national policy changes, with a focus on those affecting local government and of particular relevance to the Committee's Work Programme.

Outcomes

This information facilitated the Chair and Lead Members to maintain an overview, to identify any areas that may be of interest and to consider the potential impact on the Council at an early stage, with specific focus on any changes in respect of financial settlements and the approach to funding.

Scrutiny of social connectivity in Kirklees – Final report and action plan

During 2023/24 The Committee had continued with its work to examine the issue of social connectivity with the aim of helping to inform and shape the approach in responding to this issue, in light of the potential impact on the health and wellbeing of local people

In September 2024, the Committee considered its 'Final Report - Scrutiny of Social Connectivity in Kirklees' along with the accompanying Action Plan, which had been completed by the Cabinet Member for Education and Communities, in response to the Committee's recommendations.

Councillor Amanda Pinnock, the Cabinet Member for Education and Communities, welcomed the comprehensive report and its recommendations. She noted the risk factors that could impact on social connectivity and stressed the importance of community hubs, the need to ensure spaces were available for people to come together and that provision was in place, from the Council and its partners, to support residents. She accepted the recommendations and undertook to ensure that this work continued. She thanked all those involved in the compilation and production of the report.

Councillor Elizabeth Smaje, the former Chair of the Committee, was also present for the item and highlighted a number of points that had arisen through the Committee's work on this issue, resulting in the ten recommendations. She thanked all those who had contributed to this work and the Cabinet Member for her response.

Members discussed early intervention and prevention being key in respect of addressing these issues, with wider awareness being a good starting point. It was acknowledged that Ward

Councillors were well positioned to do this, as well as supporting local groups, signposting people to relevant support and identifying gaps in provision.

Outcomes

The Committee expressed thanks to all those involved in compiling and contributing to the report and welcomed the positive response to the Committee's recommendations, as set out in the action plan.

It asked that that further consideration be given to the issue of specific budget provision to enhance the social connectivity work already taking place and encourage collaborative working.

A progress report in respect of the Action Plan is included within the Committee's Work Programme for 2025/26.

Opportunities - Partnership and Funding

In December 2024 a presentation was given in respect of activities associated with identifying and pursuing partnership and funding opportunities that supported the Council priorities.

It was explained that constant monitoring took place in respect of opportunities for funding, collaborative working or associated with wider social or economic changes such as new technologies. Services worked closely with a wide range of partners, nationally, regionally and locally, including local community groups and the Council had a close working relationship with the West Yorkshire Combined Authority.

Members received the following information in response to their questions and comments:

- An External Funding Framework was in place, which set out the guiding principles to encourage a consistent and strategic approach including, the need for early consideration of funding when designing projects and services. The framework aimed to embed a 'think funding' mindset within the organisation and a communications initiative was planned in the near future to further promote this principle; services were encouraged to be creative in this area.
- There was a wide range of training and development and central support available to services and partner agencies, in terms of identifying and assessing funding opportunities and bid development, amongst other things. Tools and resources were now in place to minimise the possibility of missed opportunities, including a comprehensive search and alert tool, 'Grant Finder'.
- To date, engagement and collaborative working with other local authorities on projects had been undertaken with West Yorkshire Combined Authority led bids, however the benefits of doing so were recognised and it would be considered in the future where it was possible.
- A tracking spreadsheet captured opportunities which the Council had applied for, or were considering but also recorded why a particular funding opportunity had not been progressed. The 'Go/No Go' process was an in-depth assessment used to decide if an opportunity was right for Kirklees and if the necessary resources were available to deliver a strong application and to deliver the project.

Outcomes

The Committee resolved that, in order to support the 'think funding' mindset, Lead Members should ensure that external funding possibilities were considered, where appropriate and relevant to the issues being considered by their respective Panels.

Council Plan 2025/26 - Pre-Decision Scrutiny

The Leader of the Council and the Head of Policy, Partnerships and Corporate Planning gave a presentation in respect of the 2025/26 Council Plan, highlighting the following:

- The 2025/26 document represented a revision of the previous council plan and the intention was to undertake a more in-depth review during 2025.
- The longer-term elements such as the vision, shared outcomes and key partnership strategies had been in place for a significant period of time and remained in place, at this point,
- The plan set out the priorities and the areas of focus for the Council and the budget outlined the resourcing to align with those.
- The vision; 'For Kirklees to be a district that combines a strong, sustainable economy with a great quality of life – leading to thriving communities, growing businesses, high prosperity and low inequality where people enjoy better health throughout their lives'.
- The eight shared outcomes:
    1. Shaped by People
    2. Best Start
    3. Well
    4. Independent
    5. Aspire and Achieve
    6. Sustainable Economy
    7. Safe and Cohesive
    8. Clean and Green

    and the Council's additional outcome; Efficient and Effective
- The importance of working in partnership to deliver the vision and the four key partnership strategies:
    1. Kirklees Health and Wellbeing Strategy
    2. Environment Strategy
    3. Inclusive Communities Framework
    4. Inclusive Economy Strategy
- The principles and approach including place-based working and the supporting behaviours and values set out in the People Strategy.
- The four Council Plan priorities:
    1. Getting the basics right – a balanced budget and a modern organisation
    2. Protecting the vulnerable and achieving inclusion
    3. Thriving people and communities – now and over the longer-term
    4. Local economic growth – working with regional and national partners
- The areas of focus under each priority.

Outcomes

As a result of the feedback received from the Committee, the following amendments were made:

- Refined the area of focus on external funding, so it emphasises the importance of bringing external funding into our partnership working, especially with community organisations.
- Added a more explicit reference to the environment as an aspect of 'place' under 'people, partners, place'.
- Added an additional 'area of focus' – to raise awareness of the Environment Strategy, engaging with partners and communities on our shared role in delivering its ambitions.
- With reference to a recommendation about the plan being more explicit about covering a longer timeframe than one-year, key features of the plan which apply to a timeframe longer than the 25/26 financial year were included in section 2.7 of the report to Council and a commitment was given to consider timeframes whilst undertaking the more in-depth review ahead of the 2026 Council Plan.

The final Council Plan for 2025/26 was considered by Cabinet on 11th February 2025 and referred to Council with a recommendation that it be adopted. Council approved the plan on 5th March 2025 for incorporation into the Council's Policy Framework.

People Strategy

A report was submitted in February 2025 which provided an update on the Council's People Strategy and invited feedback from Committee Members.

The refreshed People Strategy had been soft launched to Kirklees senior staff and managers in January 2021 and was underpinned by the Council's values and behaviours. The vision was to 'achieve our shared outcomes through people with the right skills values and behaviours working in partnerships in our places'.

Delivery of the strategy was currently within Phase 3 and this had included a review of the format, supported by the Policy and Partnerships Team, to take account of benchmarking of themes across the public and private sectors. It was recommended that the current approach continue into Phase 4. Priorities had, and would, change, as the delivery of the strategy progressed, to take account of both internal and external factors and employment trends.

The priorities and a summary of the key activities delivered during Phase 3 were given.

Outcomes

Following discussion, the Committee requested that their comments be taken into account in future delivery and the shaping of the next phase and welcomed the approach in terms of the use of apprenticeships to address recruitment challenges in areas such as social work, and the positive impact of 'Project Search'.

The Committee visited the Employee Health Care Service in May 2025 to gain a greater insight into the different elements of the provision in respect of clinical, wellbeing and restorative practice and the positive outcomes achieved.

Figure 2 - The committee's visit to Employee Healthcare in May 2025

Strategic Intelligence Assessment and Kirklees Communities Partnership Plan

In May 2025 the Committee received its annual report in relation to the Kirklees Strategic Intelligence Assessment (SIA) and the priorities for the Communities Partnership Plan (CPP). This highlighted the intention to undertake a full review of the SIA and the CPP during 2025, with a view to implementation of the new plan in 2026/27 and included highlights of some of the work that had taken place in 2024-2025.

Councillor Amanda Pinnock, the Portfolio Holder for Education and Communities and Chair of the Communities Safety Partnership, was present at the meeting. and contributions were also welcomed from the District Commanders for West Yorkshire Police and West Yorkshire Fire Service, the Service Director for Communities and Access Services, the Head of Communities, Kirklees Highways, Safer Kirklees and the Data and Insight Enablement Lead for Adults and Communities.

Outcomes

The Committee supported the priorities for 2025/26, as set out in the report, noted the progress made by the partnership during 2024/25 and welcomed the proposed engagement with all Councillors and Scrutiny, at an early stage, in respect of the full review of the Strategic Impact Assessment and development of the Communities Partnership Plan for 2026 to 2029.

Armed Forces Covenant Update

In May 2025 a comprehensive update was given on the Armed Forces Covenant and the work of the Kirklees Armed Forces Covenant Board.

Councillor Beverley Addy, the responsible Portfolio Holder and Councillor Masood Ahmed, the Council's Armed Forces Champion, and Chair of the Armed Forces Covenant (AFC) Board attended the meeting.

It was explained that:

- Kirklees Council had signed the covenant in July 2017 with cross-party and partner support.
- The Board was formed of a number of partners who came together to work collaboratively to fulfil the legal duty and actively support the armed forces community. The Board had developed an action plan which included both Council and partner priorities. It had achieved a 'strong' silver in the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme and was working towards Gold.
- The Council was committed to supporting the armed forces community by working across the range of Council services, in partnership with external partners, local and national charities, other public sector organisations and businesses.
- The mandate was to remove disadvantage, not to give advantageous treatment, although special consideration was appropriate, in some cases, for those who had given the most.
- The progress made since the last visit to the Committee (in June 2023) and an outline of the priorities for the future. This included significant work undertaken to engage with GP practices across the district and encourage them to become veteran friendly accredited.

The Committee also welcomed Mick Riley, a veteran, member of the AFC Board, the co-founder of Tommy's Lounge and director of the charity 'Tommy's Voice'. Mick gave a presentation in relation to the concept and background behind the development of Tommy's Lounge; a coffee lounge created to be a safe space where veterans would feel comfortable and could meet to talk to each other on a one-to-one basis, providing a source of connection and conversation and thus helping to establish relationships and peer support with benefits for wellbeing and mental health. The hope was to develop this facility to become a 'one-stop shop' across the range of services; to assist and support veterans who had not previously had to deal with such matters in navigating the policies and processes associated with things such as paying rent, finding accommodation, claiming benefits, applying for a job, pensions etc.

The Committee was informed that work was being undertaken on a funding bid to support this progression.

Outcomes

Members visited Tommy's Lounge in July 2025 to see the work being undertaken at first-hand.

In response to the Committee's recommendation that all Councillors should take every opportunity to raise awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant and to encourage local businesses and organisations in their area to sign, a briefing note is in development to assist them in this.

The Chair will receive a briefing in 2025/26 in respect of progress on the funding bid.

Figure 3 - The panels visit to Tommys Lounge on 23rd July 2025

Looking forward to 2025/26

- Leader, Finance and Corporate Portfolio Holders' Priorities
- Financial Management of the Council including the Budget Proposals for 2025/26.
- Council Plan – Pre-Decision Scrutiny
- Crime and Disorder:
    a. Communities Partnership Plan
    b. Annual Refresh of the Strategic Impact Assessment
- Council Plan and Corporate Performance – Quarterly Reports
- Corporate Risk – Quarterly Reports
- Corporate Safeguarding – Update
- Social Connectivity in Kirklees – Update on Action Plan Progress
- Devolution, Partnership Working and External Funding Opportunities
- Tourism Strategy – Pre-Decision Scrutiny
- Customer Services
- Comms Strategy
- Transformation Priorities – Delivery
- LGA Peer Challenge - Update

Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel 2024/25

Panel Membership

Panel Membership
Councillor Jo Lawson [Lead Member]
Councillor Eric Firth
Councillor Alison Munro
Councillor Jane Rylah
Councillor Timothy Bamford
Councillor Habiban Zaman
Helen Clay [Co-Optee]
Kim Taylor [Co-Optee]

Work Programme 2024/25

- Services provided from Hospital to Home in Kirklees.
- Capacity and Demand - Kirklees Health and Adult Social Care System.
- Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Communities Accessing Care
- Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee updates.
- CQC-State of care of regulated services across Kirklees.
- Access to dentistry.
- Kirklees Safeguarding Adults Board (KSAB) 2021/22 Annual Report.
- Adults Social Care/CQC Inspection
- Healthy Child Programme.
- Joined up hospital services in Kirklees.
- NHS 10 Year Plan.
- Health System Financial Overview.
- Call In of Kirklees Care Homes.

Panel Highlights

Services from Hospital to Home, Capacity and Demand and Communities Accessing Care

The Panel included in its work programme a focus on services from hospital to home, capacity and demand and communities accessing care.

The Panel was advised that Kirklees had two hospital discharge teams which were based at Dewsbury District Hospital and Huddersfield Royal Infirmary. Hospital discharges were a multiagency approach which included Social Workers, Therapists and providers supporting the home first model of care.

Officers explained that acute trusts operated an Opel level. When trusts were at level 4, this was where trusts would describe there were pressures, and Kirklees Council would respond appropriately by working towards getting a speedy discharge where possible, working with additional support from other teams.

Representatives from Kirklees Health and Care Partnership and Kirklees Council provided information on accessing care in the community, which assessed progress of the integration of services and workforce in every neighbourhood to access GP services, hospital referrals, reablement support, community pharmacies and the uptake of vaccination programmes. There were nine Primary Care networks across Kirklees which were a group of general practices who aligned key services across the community including the local authority, voluntary and pharmacy sectors.

Representatives from Kirklees Health and Care Partnership along with Kirklees Council provided an update on demand and recovery of planned care across Kirklees which included

the focus of the work being done across Kirklees core providers to manage capacity and demand and catch up with delayed planned surgery, therapeutics and diagnostics. There were workforce gaps of consultants across Mid Yorkshire NHS Teaching Trust and Calderdale and Huddersfield NHS Foundation Trust. New developments and initiatives were in place including introducing community diagnostic hubs.

There were concerns regarding the capacity of appointments in Ears Nose and Throat, a recruitment process had taken place to reduce backlogs. There were no concerns with staffing at the community diagnostic centres.

Outcomes

As a result of the discussion, the Panel noted that 94% of discharges in 2024 up to 30th September had been on pathways 0 & 1 and requested the percentage of patients on pathway 1 who had been re-admitted to hospital. Severe pressures within hospitals were also noted with the Opel reaching level 4. The Lead Member requested that they be updated when Opel was at level 4 for a consistent length of time.

The Panel noted that a community diagnostic hub was to be opened at Huddersfield University Campus to help with backlogs and requested a visit prior to opening.

Dentistry Services

In the Panel's meeting on 9th April 2025, members of Children's scrutiny panel attended where dental services were considered.

Representatives from the Integrated Care Board (ICB) presented a report on dental services across Kirklees and provided an update since their last visit in 2024. It was recognised that access to dentistry nationally and locally was a challenge regarding workforce gaps and procurement restrictions. Improving access remained a priority for the ICB and work had been undertaken to improve dental services for those living in the area by building positive relationships with the profession and local dental practices to continue to improve services.

The Panel noted the interventions put in place to improve access, however there we no funds available for additional practices in areas where there was a deficit of places. There was one practice within Kirklees specifically dedicated to children's access and children waiting for extractions through surgery had improved as theatre space had increased, however, the average waiting time of referral from a dentist to an orthodontist was approximately 2 years.

Outcomes

A number of concerns highlighted by the Panel were addressed and further data was requested for improvements of 5-year-olds experiencing toothy decay; The number of children on waiting lists requiring surgical extractions; The number of new patients taken on since the interventions had been put in place to improve service delivery; The number of NHS dentists across Kirklees.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

In the Panel's meeting held in August 2024, Representatives from Kirklees Health and Care Partnership, Kirklees Council and Southwest Yorkshire Partnership Foundation Trust provided an update on the Kirklees Health and Wellbeing strategy.

The Panel received details of availability of mental health support across Kirklees which included how residents of Kirklees could access support; how partnership working supported delivery of services; the community offer; talking therapies, crisis services and gaps identified in services.

The Panel noted that life expectancy of people with mental health issues was reduced by 15 years in certain areas, the health inequality programme facilitated the right quality of care at the right time to improve this. Older people and loneliness were addressed by promoting the work being undertaken for loneliness across Kirklees. Anyone referred to talking therapies gained access within 6 weeks. For high intensity therapies, 70% of people referred at the point of assessment received treatment within 3 months. ADHD diagnosis for adults in Kirklees was currently an 18-week pathway from referral, for children it was 12 – 18 months to get assessments. The 24-hour helpline was available to anyone, and both adults and children could self-refer.

Outcomes

The Panel requested that the Integrated Care Board provide Z cards to circulate to Members and proposed an action on how the service received wider communication with the voluntary sector through the Mental Health Alliance.

Call in of Cabinet Decision in relation to the future of Council Operated Dementia Care Home Provision (Castle Grange and Claremont House)

At the meeting held on 10th January 2025, the Scrutiny Panel considered the grounds of a call-in request, in respect of the final decision taken by Cabinet on 10th December 2024 relating to the future of the Councils operated Dementia Care Home provision.

The two decision making areas which were the focus of the call-in review meeting were;

- A lack of transparency over the financial rationalisation for privatisation
- Financial Discrepancies and Opaqueness

At the review meeting, the Scrutiny Panel considered verbal submission from Councillors who were signatories to the call in and views from Ward Councillors and Members of the Public. The Panel also considered the response from the Cabinet Member and Senior Officers from Adults Social Care.

Outcomes

That the decision taken in relation to the Future of Council Operated Dementia Care Home Provision (Castle Grange and Claremont House) be referred to the Cabinet with the following recommendation in relation to the areas of focus as follows: That the decision be put on hold

and that Cabinet be provided with the full, multi-year financial analysis in a further report and reconsider the decision on the basis of that information.

The Panel also highlighted the following learning points:

- In order to ensure openness and transparency, full and complete information should be provided to all Cabinet Members and published in Cabinet reports, such as the multi-year financial analysis, wherever possible, restricted if necessary due to being private information.
- That pre-decision scrutiny by the relevant Panel should be undertaken to inform significant Cabinet decisions.

Knowl Park House visit

As part of their continuing review into Dementia Care in Kirklees, Panel Members visited Know Park House on 28th April 2025 to view the facilities offered to Day Care users, and the offer from the Centre for Excellence.

Figure 4 - Visit to Knowl Park House on 28th April 2025

Figure 5 - Visit to the Centre for Excellence on 28th April 2025

Looking forward to 2025/26

- Access to GPs
- 0-19 Commissioning – Access to Care
- Patient transport from Home to Hospital
- Safeguarding Adults
- Prevention of Suicide
- Health System Financial overview
- Changes relating to NHS England, ICB's and Healthwatch
- Care Quality Commission update
- Quality of residential and domiciliary care
- Winter pressures
- CQC Kirklees Inspection update
- Adults Social Care Risk Register

Comments

Kim Taylor – Scrutiny Co-optee

I was pleased to serve as a voluntary co-optee on the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny panel for another year.

I feel that this has been a challenging year given the financial position of the local health and social care system which has underpinned many of the discussions and reflects the national situation. It has been reassuring to hear from partners about the work that is being done to meet current year budgets and identify any risks.

Some of the discussions where there has been public representation have been very emotive e.g. the future of council operated dementia care home provision which resulted in a call-in, however, I am conscious that my role on the panel is to ensure that due process has been followed, and any decisions are based on robust evidence. One of the positive outcomes following the call in was a reflection on how the council could build on its existing processes to ensure even greater transparency.

The panel has heard many informative updates where progress has been encouraging e.g. the work being done across Kirklees core providers of planned care to manage capacity and demand, and the work of health services in the community. A lot of Information is provided between meetings which helps me to keep up to date with agenda items on the workplan and think about any questions I may have at panel.

One of the highlights of the year for me personally was the recent visit to Knowl Park House, in Mirfield it was wonderful to have the opportunity to look round the new state of the art facility and meet some of the staff to hear about how they support people living with dementia and their carers.

I am looking forward to continuing as a voluntary co-optee in the next municipal year.

Councillor Jo Lawson – Lead Member

I would first of all like to thank Nicola Sylvester, the governance officer for Health and Adult Social Care scrutiny panel for all her help and support over the last year. Michelle Cross, Executive Director of Adult Social Care has also been extremely supportive of the scrutiny panel, attending our meetings, giving a number of informal briefings to the panel and answering any queries we have had.

We have had a very busy year looking at a wide range of provision and I would like to thank those who came to speak with us and answer the numerous questions that reports throw up. It was pleasing to see the Bronte Birth Centre at Dewsbury District Hospital reopened and with-it women being able to give birth again within Kirklees. Our last meeting of the municipal year saw another deep dive into dentistry provision within Kirklees. Even though the service faces challenges, the commissioners are striving to rectify as much as they possibly can with the limited resources they have, and we look forward to another update in the next municipal year.

Areas such as mental health provision and the patients journey from hospital to home showed some of the innovative work happening within Kirklees for our residents and I look forward to

hearing further examples of such work in the next municipal year from our wide range of service providers.

In closing we have had a very busy but productive year. I would like to thank all the panel members who have attended scrutiny meetings armed with questions and their thoughts on the topics to be discussed.

Growth and Regeneration Scrutiny Panel 2024/25

Panel Membership

Panel Membership
Councillor Zarina Amin [Chair]
Councillor Bill Armer
Councillor Alison Munro
Councillor Aziz Daji
Councillor Harry McCarthy
Chris Friend [Co-Optee]
Jonathan Milner [Co-Optee]

Work Programme 2024/25

- Kirklees Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 - 2029 & Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy 2024
- Approval of Damp Mould and Condensation Policy
- Town Centre visit
- Kirklees Major Transport Capital Schemes; Annual Report 2024
- Our Cultural Heart
- Proposed National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) reforms consultation and other changes to the planning system
- Inclusive Economic Strategy
- Draft Kirklees Transport Strategy, Policy Themes & Consultation Plan
- Community Asset Transfer
- Housing Growth Update

Panel Highlights

Town Centre visits

On the 12th August 2024, David Shepherd, Executive Director for Place, escorted panel members on a tour of the various regeneration/construction projects being undertaken in Huddersfield town centre. The visit included sites such as Buxton House, George Hotel, Estates Building, the Cultural Heart, New Street improvements, and Huddersfield Railway Station.

At a Panel meeting on the 23rd September 2024, the portfolio holder advised that looking around Huddersfield town centre there is a great deal of work on demolition being undertaken. Initially the work was inside therefore it was not visible; however, it is now possible to physically see the work being undertaken to deliver the vision for Huddersfield. The Panel received a summary update of the 'Our Cultural Heart' development in terms of the masterplan, the phasing, and progress in relation to phases one and two and beyond. The Panel was reminded that the Huddersfield Blueprint, was launched in June 2019, with the aim of transforming the town centre and Our Cultural Heart was one of the six target areas and is not the entirety of the blueprint, but delivery of the Cultural Heart is the big standout flagship initiative within the blueprint.

Figure 6 - Panel Members visit to the Cultural Heart site on the 12th August 2024.

On the 4th November 2024, panel members were taken on a guided tour around the sites that would be the location for a new library, food hall, museum and gallery, queen street plot, events square, public realm and multi-storey car park.

Figure 7 - Panel's visit to the Queensgate development site on 4th November 2024

Outcome

The Panel welcomed the update and the opportunity to visit key regeneration/construction sites that aimed to realise the priority within the Corporate Plan, to continue to invest in the towns and villages as a recognition of the economic future of Kirklees and the importance of the town centres. The Panel requested further details on the social value strategy for Our Cultural Heart development.

Kirklees Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 - 2029 and the Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy 2024

At the Panel meeting on the 12th August 2024, the Panel received an update on the Kirklees Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 – 2029 and the Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy 2024. The portfolio holder advised that the strategy would run until 2029 and is a statutory requirement every five years; and is of critical strategic importance to Kirklees.

The Panel was informed that housing, and having a safe, secure and decent home is a pre-requisite for a healthy and productive life, health, education and training opportunities, economic inclusion, is all supported through this basic necessity. The direct cost of insecure housing to individuals needing support and the national housing crisis, imposes significant direct and indirect pressure on the council's finances.

By way of a brief illustration, the Panel was given information on the pressure currently on housing. For example, there are 22,000 council homes, plus approximately 6000 available through other registered providers, including housing associations, against a current waiting list of 18,500. Each year 1,800 homes are allocated, which is the total turnover of housing in council housing stock and other registered providers. Last year 1,926, homelessness assessments were conducted, even without the 18,500 already waiting for housing. The presentations of homeless households significantly exceed the total number of housing that becomes available each year.

The Panel was informed that given the context, it is clear that the new housing solutions Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy for 2024, needs to navigate a difficult task to manage demand, and ensure that those in need are supported as well as possible within the national constraints.

The policy rightly places emphasis on provision of warm, safe and decent accommodation and also on helping people to remain within Kirklees as close to their support networks as possible. It places emphasis on the impact of housing insecurity on children and also on early interventions to reduce the number of households ultimately presenting as homeless. This is a very difficult area of service delivery, and officers should be thanked for the hard work that has gone into developing this strategy and the diligence with which they support vulnerable residents in need, against a significant resource deficit.

Outcome

The Panel welcomed the update and recognised the significant challenge and pressure faced in trying to provide housing for those in need. The Panel noted that there are many vulnerable groups and asked for further information and a breakdown of the number of young single people on the housing register and also asked that future information include people who are ex-service personnel.

The Kirklees Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 - 2029 and Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy 2024 was approved by Cabinet on the 10 September 2024.

Community Asset Transfers

On the 20th January 2025, the Panel received an update on Community Asset Transfers and was provided with information which outlined the breadth of the assets that had been transferred in the past. The Panel was advised that Community Asset Transfer (CAT) is the transfer of ownership and management of public land and buildings from the council to a community organisation.

The information gave details which explained that all communities are different, and all community groups are different. The buildings and assets are all quite different from each other and therefore, the approach is tailored, and the policy is tailored to deliver flexibility, and it enables officers and community groups to come together to cooperate and make sure that the model is good for both sides. Assets are transferred at less than market value for local, social, economic or environmental benefit. This is to try and ensure that they have a good chance of success.

The purpose of CATs in Kirklees is to bring to life the councils longstanding commitment as an enabling council to invest in communities, help communities achieve their aspirations, and ensure assets and services remain available for the community.

Outcome

The Panel recognised the challenges with regards to CATs, including, the Council's economic challenges, managing expectations of community organisations/council, capacity within the community and the timescales for the process which can be between18 to 24 months. The Panel however, welcomed all the work undertaken to try and ensure that CAT's have a good chance of success.

Looking forward to 2025/26

- Kirklees Transport Strategy
- Our Cultural Heart Update on Progress
- Transport Programme Annual Update
- Homes and Partnership Service Update
- Regulatory Compliance Update
- Temp accommodation/ B&B progress
- Response to Awaab's Law
- Tenant voice Strategy Update
- District Heating Update
- Building Safety Compliance
- Site visits to regeneration projects
- IT Systems (resilience and transformation)
- Local Plan/planning update

Comments

Co-optee comment - Jonathan Milner

As a member of the Growth and Regeneration Panel, we had the opportunity to discuss many varied, interesting and challenging topics in the Panel meetings. This year, the Panel focused on the development growth of the district, the progress of the Cultural Heart development, and the integrated Transport Programme. The meetings have been well attended, and the council officers have proven to be very knowledgeable and provided supporting evidence for their decisions. The Scrutiny support team have always been on hand to provide supporting material and advice when asked for. The Scrutiny Panel members have always challenged and queried decisions in a collegiate and friendly manner and my time on the panel has been enlightening and rewarding.

Lead member comment - Cllr Zarina Amin

As Chair of the Growth and Regeneration Scrutiny Panel, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to all members and officers for their ongoing engagement, commitment, and contributions throughout this period. Over the past months, the panel has reviewed and scrutinised several key areas, including the Kirklees Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, the Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy, the Our Cultural Heart regeneration programme, and Community Asset Transfers, among other important topics. These discussions have been both productive and insightful, and I commend the quality of information shared and the openness of dialogue between members and officers.

Members particularly welcomed the Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, recognising it as a vital step forward in supporting officers to ensure that vulnerable individuals and families are placed in appropriate housing. The strategy reflects a clear commitment to

early intervention and coordinated support, which we hope will have a tangible impact on reducing homelessness across Kirklees.

In addition, we undertook a number of site visits, including to the Our Cultural Heart development and other key regeneration areas. It was encouraging to witness the progress made to date and to see first-hand the potential for unlocking a thriving, vibrant town centre. The regeneration work underway demonstrates ambition and provides real opportunity for transformative change.

I would also like to acknowledge the responsive and transparent approach of officers in following up on member concerns and queries. This collaborative working relationship is fundamental to effective scrutiny, and it is heartening to see such commitment to keeping members well-informed and involved.

Once again, thank you to my fellow panel members for their valuable contributions and to officers for their time, clarity, and professionalism in supporting the work of this panel.

Children's Scrutiny Panel 2024/25

Panel Membership

Panel Membership
Councillor Itrat Ali [Chair]
Councillor Richard Smith
Councillor Hannah McKerchar
Councillor Jane Rylah
Councillor Tanisha Bramwell
Councillor Ashleigh Robinson

Work Programme 2024/25

- Review of the Improvement Journey and Ofsted Inspections
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Transformation Plan and sufficiency of SEND and mainstream capacity
- Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA)
- Quality Assurance – impact of auditing the Children's Service
- Educational Outcomes
- Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) – Annual Report
- Health Provision for Children and Young People in Kirklees
- Emotional wellbeing provision for children in Kirklees and Mental Health in schools – 'keep in mind'
- Review of Children's Residential Homes and Foster Care Placements
- Feedback on issues considered by Kirklees Parenting Board
- Partnership Arrangements
- Voice of the Young Person
- Performance Information (Children's Service)

In addition to the formal meetings of the Panel, informal meetings took place to facilitate pre-decision scrutiny such as Educational Outcomes and consideration of performance data, the highlights of which were presented in the public meetings. The Panel also undertook a number of visits to internal teams, external partners and voluntary groups and a summary of some of these is outlined later in this report.

The Chair of the Panel also held Lead Member Briefings during 2024/25 with the Director of Children and Families, the Service Director for Learning and Early Support, Service Director for Children and Families and the Cabinet Members for Children's and Education.

Committee Highlights

Quality Assurance Annual Report

In October 2024, the Panel considered the Children's Services Annual Quality Assurance report which provided an overview of audit and learning processes for the last 12 months for consideration and discussion. Quality assurance in Children's Social Care was conducted through a number of strands and took the form of –

- Learning Conversations – between Managers and Practitioners and involved looking at a single child's file to understand the quality of the work within that file.
- Practice Learning Days (PLDs) – a team or area would meet to conduct a deep dive into one area of practice, for example, the quality of work addressing domestic abuse.
- Deep Dive Audits – issues or themes arising from Learning Conversations would be discussed and considered by Senior Management and a plan for improvement put in place.

Outcomes

The Panel agreed to attend some of the forthcoming Practice Learning Days (PLDs) with Teams across the Children's Service and report back with updates to future Panel Meetings. The Panel visited the following PLDs to observe the work taking place with teams - Care Leavers on the 29th November 2024 and the Youth Engagement Team on the 10th January 2025 and provided updates to the Panel on the outcomes of the visits.

Ofsted Inspection of Children's Services – outcome and recommendations

In October 2024, the Panel considered the overview of the Ofsted Inspection of Children's Services which confirmed that the inspection had taken place over a three-week period and was the first full inspection since 2019 when Children's Services had been judged as 'Requires Improvement'. The outcome of the inspection was that Children's Services were now judged to be 'Good'. The most important areas raised by Ofsted in their report were on the following areas –

- Areas for development
- Leadership and staff
- Areas judged to be good
- Areas of strength
- Areas for improvement
- Kirklees Parenting Strategy

Outcomes

The Panel agreed that the Ofsted report was very positive and that it was encouraging to see the significant improvements that had been made since the last Ofsted report in 2019. They asked that their thanks and congratulations be passed onto the Teams within Children's Services for their hard work and commitment to improving the delivery of services and support to children and young people in Kirklees.

As part of their scrutiny focus in this area, the Panel also met with the Children in Care and Care Leavers Team on the 12th December 2024 and met with Managers and noted that partnership working was key to helping to manage the risk to vulnerable children. The voice of the child was a basic rule of thumb in everything that they did and they were in tune with the children in their care, seeking the voice of the child always as the starting point.

Feedback from Kirklees Parenting Board

The Panel discussed the Kirklees Parenting Board meeting, held on 24th October 2024, which had been a take-over event organised and led by Care Leavers, as part of Care Leavers' Month. The Chair of the Children's Scrutiny Panel, and Cabinet Member for Children's Services had attended and described the event as interactive, inspirational and enjoyable. The meeting was attended by providers of children's services and representatives from the healthcare, education and housing, as well as Cabinet Members. Care Leavers presented at the event and showed videos that they had produced about their experiences. The young people also

facilitated small group discussions, inviting delegates to provide solutions to challenges faced by Care Leavers. It was hoped that two of the young people would join the Kirklees Parenting Board as members in future meetings of the Board to represent the voice of the Care Leaver.

In January 2025, the Panel noted that the Board had focused on health priorities for looked after children and care leavers, including dental health checks and increasing access to counselling services. The Chair of the Panel remarked on the efforts she had observed at previous meetings of the Board to engage with young people, using their language and putting young people at the heart of the conversation.

In March 2025, the Panel were advised on the improvements to the overall offer for care leavers, which included free prescriptions agreed with the Integrated Care Board (ICB) and a better housing offer to ensure accommodation was suitable.

Review of Children's Residential Homes and Fostering Provision

In February 2025, the Panel considered a report, which provided assurance and information on Residential Children's Homes and Fostering Services in Kirklees. The majority of children in care in Kirklees were in family settings, with Foster Carers or Kinship/Connected Carers. A small number of children lived in residential, small group homes. Placements were also commissioned from independent fostering agencies and independent care homes where necessary. There was a national deficit in placements available for children; local and national campaigns had been launched to recruit foster carers. The report set out the position for recruiting Foster Carers.

The Panel asked how confident the Service was that the residential homes would improve their Ofsted judgements on the next cycle of inspection, and whether good practice was shared across the homes. Joel Hanna, Head of Corporate Parenting and Looked After Children, advised that several activities had led to improvements which included moving residential staff around homes to share good practice and creating a progression route and enhanced leadership capacity for residential practitioners.

Outcomes

As part of the scrutiny focus in this area, the Panel reviewed Children's Residential Homes and Foster Care Placements in Kirklees to ensure that children were living in the right home and environment and a visit had taken place to the Mockingbird Support Group on the 12th May 2025 which had been attended by foster carers and special guardianship order carers. Carers fed back on their experiences and challenges of being a foster carer.

In addition, the Chair of the Panel had visited the Kirklees Fostering Network in September 2024, where she had met with Foster Carers to hear their first-hand experiences and challenges and had also met a number of foster babies.

Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) Overview

In February 2025, the Panel considered a report which provided an insight into the national and local challenges relating to Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). The Panel asked how the voice of the parent was included within the EHCPs, and was advised that in wider terms, PCAN had been involved in the quality compliance group and had been involved with recruitment to the team.

The Panel recognised that there were local and national challenges due to the rise in EHCP numbers but noted that it was evident from the report that the service was working in partnership, using a systems-based approach, and focusing on quality.

Communication with parents was an area for improvement, and changes had been made to the communication system, with calls being put through more effectively. Jo-Anne Sanders advised that EHCPs should be co-produced with parents, and the Service was committed to providing a better experience. Where parents and carers were not satisfied, they could ask to meet with Senior Officers or Cabinet Portfolio Holders, or contact Kirklees Information and Advice Service, who could advocate for parents. PCAN offered challenge as well as support and brought experiences of parents and carers to the attention of the service. Investment had been made in a new IT system with a parent and partner portal, where parents would be able to see progress made by logging in, also allowing the team to concentrate on casework.

Outcomes

The Panel agreed to meet with the Education Health and Care Plan (EHCPs) Team on the 13th May 2025 to observe the work being undertaken to support the work of the SEND Transformation Plan. The Panel were also scheduled to observe the decision-making process for EHCPs and the visits would take place in the 2025/26 municipal year. The decision-making process was in 3 stages, Decision to assess Panel, Decision to issue Panel and Specialist Placement Panel.

New initiatives of schools working in clusters

In March 2025, the Panel considered a report providing an insight into the new initiative of schools working in clusters. Cluster working involved bringing together geographical groups of mainstream Primary and Secondary Schools (and those in the three-tier system), so that school SENDCOs could meet to discuss the emerging needs of young people and receive help and support from the team around the cluster. Funding was provided to clusters to support individual children or groups of children, or to fund staff training.

The Panel asked how feedback from families would be used to inform the cluster model, and how the families of children with SEND were communicated with about the process. The Panel were informed that schools would contact parents of children who were discussed at the meetings, that the children were anonymous within the meeting, and that after the meeting the schools would provide the parents with the outcomes of the cluster's conversation. The Parent and Carer Forum were working on parent engagement on a range of matters related to SEND and would be reporting their feedback.

Outcomes

The Panel agreed to visit some cluster meetings to observe the process in action and these visits had been scheduled to take place at a number of schools in Kirklees during the 2025/26 municipal year.

Special Schools – update on the rebuild of Joseph Norton Academy and Woodley School and College

In April 2025, the Panel considered a report giving an update on the rebuild of Joseph Norton Academy and Woodley School and College as part of the Council's overall strategy to enable Kirklees Children to be educated in their local area and to secure sufficient places for Learners in Kirklees. The design phases were nearing completion and artists impressions of each new school building were available. Work was expected to start on both new sites by June 2025 and be completed in a year, however many factors could affect the timescales. Woodley School and College's rebuild would take longer due to the necessity for demolition on the site.

The Panel asked about engagement with parents, staff and children and were informed that a dedicated team had run play sessions and more formal facilitated feedback to gather the children's voice. This had included videos, drawings and comments, resulting in elements being included in the design such as gardens outside classrooms and a farm provision at Joseph Norton, and a Forest School provision and outside playground including slides, swings and trampolines at Woodley. Proposed designs had been taken back to the schools to ensure the designs reflected the feedback given and reactions from the children had been positive.

The Panel asked for detail of the consultation process and were advised that there was a genuine commitment to ongoing engagement with all parties, and that results of the consultation undertaken by Woodley School and College and Joseph Norton Academy as part of their "significant change" process had been published. Residents, parents, pupils, staff and relevant ward councillors had all been engaged with at the time when sites for both builds were chosen.

Outcomes

The Panel agreed to visit the 2 new schools in the future once the new builds had been completed.

Decline of the cohort of children in primary schools in Kirklees

In April 2025, the Panel considered a report giving an update on the decline of the cohort of children in primary schools in Kirklees. The number of children in the cohort entering Reception had been in decline since a peak in 2015/16, and the cohort across Kirklees had reduced by over 1,000 since then. Over the last five years opportunities for reducing places had been considered, to enable schools to have a more efficient financial model. The mechanism for this had been a reduction in Pupil Admission Numbers (PAN). Progress had been made, with a reduction of 7.7% Reception places, over 400 places less than 5 years ago. There were no plans for school closures, but this was the ultimate destination for schools if they could not remain sustainable. There was a heightened risk of school closures in cases where high surplus places could not be resolved.

The Panel suggested that where schools were run by Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) the governors of the MATs were often spread across a large geographical area but there were often individual school sub committees/governors whose members held local knowledge and could be valuable contacts for such future discussions. Martin Wilby, thanked the Panel for their suggestion.

The Panel asked who would make the decision on any school closures and were informed that where schools were under council control, the council made the decision, and it would follow the significant change procedure outlined at the meeting. A non-statutory consultation was always carried out by Kirklees where a controversial change was proposed, followed by statutory consultation as outlined in the admissions code. Academies would follow a similar process, also following the admissions code, and the decision would ultimately be made by the regional director at the DfE.

Outcomes

It was agreed that the suggestions made by the Panel would be taken into account by officers in taking this work forward.

Health provision for children and young people in Kirklees

Vaccinations

The Panel agreed to scrutinise the health provision for children and young people in Kirklees with a particular focus on dental care, babies and immunisations.

In January 2025, the Panel attended a Joint Informal meeting with the Health and Adult Social Care Panel and received an update giving the latest children's and young people's and adults vaccinations uptake data for Kirklees and an overview of the collaborative working with partners to maximise uptake of all vaccinations; including communications and engagement work. A number of areas were focussed on by the Panel Members and questions were asked, for example –

- The number of healthy children admitted to hospital with influenza before the vaccine programme was introduced
- How Locala funded the school vaccination programme
- Could any child advocate for themselves as to whether or not to have a vaccine
- Resources for Members on vaccinations to share with communities and help to spread the message

Outcomes

The Panel requested further information on awareness raising, how any primary and secondary children were hospitalised with flu before the vaccine was rolled out, how many pregnant women were being admitted to hospital with flu before the vaccine was introduced, and what would happen if a young person wanted the vaccine, but their parent would not give consent. Leaflets were circulated to the Panel so that they could promote vaccinations within their constituencies as a Ward Councillor. Responses to all the questions asked by the Panel Members were provided by officers and shared with the Panels for information.

Healthy Child Programme

In February 2025, the Panel attended the Health and Adult Social Care Panel for a joint discussion on the Healthy Child Programme (HCP) 0 – 19 as part of pre-decision scrutiny in advance of the report being considered by Cabinet on the 6th May 2025. The report gave an overview of the HCP and the background to the HCP contract effective from 1st April 2026, along with key milestones for the competitive tender process and to outline the governance flightpath. The HCP was a vital commissioned service for Kirklees Council which provided a strategic alignment, health improvement and reduction in inequalities and statutory compliance, which aimed to improve health and wellbeing of children and young people (antenatal to age 19, up to 25 for Special Educational Health Needs and Disabilities).

Outcomes

The Panels agreed that the following information should be provided –

- showing the number of school nurses along with the schools they were attached to;
- the percentage of children that received the mandatory child measurement programme and vision and hearing screening;
- feedback from the consultation and engagement process;
- information on how children with SEND post 18 would be supported.

Responses to all the questions asked by the Panel Members were provided by officers and shared with the Panels for information.

Dental Services across Kirklees

In April 2025, the Panel attended the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel on the 9th April 2025 and took part in a joint discussion on Dental Services across Kirklees. Representatives from the Integrated Care Board (ICB) presented a report giving details of the current local and national position for dental services and oral health improvements.

Outcomes

The Panels requested that further information be provided by the Integrated Care Board on:

- Data around improvements of 5-year-olds experiencing tooth decay due to the interventions that the ICB had put in place
- The number of children on waiting lists requiring surgical extractions
- The number of new patients taken on since the interventions had been put in place to improve service delivery
- The number of NHS dentists across Kirklees

Responses to all the questions asked by the Panel Members were provided by officers and shared with the Panel for information.

Partnership arrangements and visits by the Panel

The Panel visited both internal teams and external partners and voluntary groups during the 2024/25 municipal year. The following visits were undertaken –

- Home-Start AGM on the 26th September 2024
- Kirklees Fostering Network Support Group on the 26th September 2024
- SEND Transformation and Commissioning Group on the 3rd October 2024
- Care Leavers Month in October 2024 which included visits to the No 11 and No 12 hubs for Care Leavers and a Drop-in session to celebrate the National Kinship Week on the 9th October 2024
- Care Leavers Achievement Awards on 30th October 2024
- Takeover Event – Care Leavers Forum on 24th October 2024
- Practice Learning Day for Care Leavers on the 29th November 2024, Youth Engagement Team on 10th January 2024
- Children in Care Team on the 12th December 2024
- Front Door Team on 11th February 2025
- Weekly Review and Referral Meeting (Emergency Duty Service) on the 12th May 2025
- Mocking Bird Carers Support Group on the 12th May 2025
- Children with Disabilities (CWD and Access and Intervention Teams on the 25th February 2025
- EHCP Team on the 13th May 2025
- Starting Well Board on the 16th May 2025 (Multi-Agency Safeguarding and Partnership arrangements)

Kirklees Fostering Network (KFN) Support Group

The Panel attended the KFN Support Group on the 26th September 2024 and a number of issues were discussed which included –

- Shortage of Foster Carers
- Challenges for carers when they had to attend meetings that children were not allowed to attend with them
- The rewarding nature of foster care and the value of the essential support between foster carers and their families
- Problems obtaining passports for children being cared for. Mockingbird Support Group fed back to the Panel in May 2025 that this matter had now been resolved, and foster carers were receiving children's passports automatically.

Figure 8 - Visit to Kirklees Fostering Network Support Group on 26th September 2024.

Care Leavers Month – October 2024

The Panel were invited to events that took place during Care Leavers Month (October 2024) and Panel Members also visited No 11 and No 12 hubs and observed the services on offer and being accessed by young people.

Figure 9 - Visit to the No 12 Care Leavers hub on the 12th December 2024

Care Leavers Achievement Awards

Members of the Panel attended the Care Leavers Achievement Awards Event at Huddersfield Town Hall on the 30th October 2024, it was a celebratory event held for Care Leavers. The evening was inspirational, with speeches from the Mayor, Councillor Viv Kendrick (Cabinet Member for Children) and very bravely from some of the young people. The atmosphere in the room was supportive throughout, particularly as the students came on stage to receive their awards. The awards ceremony was followed by a buffet, a magician and an unplanned performance of Kurdish dancing.

Takeover Event – Care Leavers Forum

The Panel attended the Takeover event on the 24th October 2024 which was facilitated by the Care Leavers Forum, supported by the Our Voice Team and Children's Rights Team. There was attendance across the board from all different providers of children's services and representatives from the Integrated Care System (ICS) healthcare, housing as well as Cabinet Members. The meeting was very interactive and following the introductions there was an ice breaker, the presentations and group exercises facilitated by the care leavers. A great amount of work had gone into preparing the event. Three videos of the care leavers were shared outlining their journey, the challenges they faced and the support they had received.

Children with Disabilities (CWD) and Access and Intervention

The Panel met with the CWD and Access and Intervention Teams on the 25th February 2025 and discussed support that was provided by the team to children with disabilities who had complex health and physical needs, children with autism and some children with behavioural needs. The caseloads in the CWD Team were manageable and weekly supervision took place with Social Workers and the team worked closely with Assessment and Intervention. The CWD Team worked closely with the EHCP Team in Education, Adults Social Care, Youth Engagement Service and other services within Children's and the police.

Figure 10 - Visit to the Children with Disabilities (CWD) and Access and Intervention Teams on 25th February 2025

The Team often struggled to find placements for some children with disabilities as their needs could be very complex and not all foster carers were skilled enough in this area to care for them. There were waiting lists for home adaptation referrals which could cause frustration to families.

Children in Care Team

Members of the Panel met with the Children in Care and Care Leavers Team on the 12th December 2024 and were informed that the team dealt with children with very complex needs. Managers were supportive and approachable and provided the right level of support. Partnership working was key to helping to manage the risk to vulnerable children and the team worked closely with the virtual school, health colleagues, housing and the police. The voice of the child was a basic rule of thumb in everything that they did and that they were in tune with the children in their care, seeking the voice of the child as always, the starting point. Sufficiency of placements within Kirklees was an issue and often looked after children had links within the area and Social Workers did not want to move them away from what they knew and their networks which could cause significant disruption to the child's schooling, family time and mental health and wellbeing.

Figure 11 - Visit to Children in Care and Care Leavers Team on 12th December 2024

Mocking Bird Carers Support Group

The Panel met with Carers from the Mockingbird Support Group on the 12th May 2025 which was attended by foster carers, Special Guardianship Order carers and Connectors. Carers fed back on their personal experiences of caring for children and foster caring. The Carers asked for information regarding venues which were free of charge to use for group functions and events. The Panel provided information detailing venues within Kirklees which could be booked by the Mockingbird Carers that were either free of charge or available at a discount to community groups. The carers advised that the child's passport was now given to the carer automatically when previously it could take years and this was due to the fact that consent was required from the biological parent.

Some quotes from Foster Carers –

"My own son is nearly 18 years old, and we've been fostering since he was 6-years-old. All the children love him and look up to him."

"I love being a foster carer, it is my life."

"When my children came to me, they hadn't had food and weren't used to having treats, they would open the fridge and couldn't believe how much food there was."

"I had no support for the first year until I joined Mockingbird and nearly gave it up. Without that support I would not have been able to carry on."

"It can be as simple as someone just asking that young person, 'how did your exams go' that can make all the difference."

EHCP Team

The Panel met with the Educational Health and Care Plan team (EHCPs) to observe the work being undertaken to support the SEND Transformation Plan. The key issues discussed with the team were around Tribunals, pressures on staff and challenges, the process for EHCP decision making, dealing with complaints, data, caseload, Post 16 Provision and recruitment of staff.

Figure 12 - Visit to the EHCP Team

Some quotes from officers in the team were –

“Complaints are such an emotive issue for us, people in the team are feeling stretched in their roles and it is very challenging.”

“Some people do not have a really clear understanding of the process, the work that goes into it, the time constraints and waiting for information from other teams.”

“This is not just a case, it’s a young person”.

“We do try and go above and beyond where we can as we want the best outcome for the child.”

Looking forward to 2025/26

The Panel agreed to focus on the following areas of scrutiny during the 2025/26 municipal year:

- Oversight of the Ofsted Improvement Plan and planned redesign of the Leaving Care Service
- Multi-agency developments around the Children’s Social Care Reforms, the Leaving Care Service and Front Door

- Visits to meet with the Leaving Care Service, Front Door and North Service Area Children's Social Care teams within the Children's Service
- SEND Sufficiency Strategy for 2025-28
- A visit to the satellite provision for the two new special schools and alternative resource provisions
- An overview of SEND Tribunals, EHCP Compliance and the Complaints Process
- Observation of the EHCP decision making process for EHCPs
- SEND Ofsted and CQC Inspection of the Kirklees Local Area Partnership's provision and the DfE White Paper proposals on SEND changes
- Educational Attainment Outcomes and Elective Home Education
- Health provision for children and young people – emotional wellbeing provisions and mental health in schools

Comments

Joanne Sanders - Service Director for Learning and Early Support

Over the last year, I have found the approach of Children's Scrutiny to be a positive one. I have felt that the panel have been intuitive in their questioning, respectful of officers and the work they undertake, and have particularly appreciated the professionalism shown by attending meetings, taking the opportunity to observe our work and reviewing data. We welcome that supportive challenge and feel that children and their families have been at the heart of their work.

Councillor Itrat Ali – Lead Member

It has been a pleasure to chair the panel this year, and I would like to extend a thank you to all panel members, Cabinet Members, Officers and Governance officers for all your hard work.

It has been a busy work program with several visits that have given a deeper insight and understanding of the services affecting children's services.

I appreciate the commitment and hard work of all partners working hard to deliver the highest standards of care for all children and young people in Kirklees.

I look forward to continuing as chair of the panel for the next municipal year.

Environment and Climate Change Panel 2024/25

Panel Membership

Panel Membership
Councillor Andrew Cooper [Chair]
Councillor David Longstaff
Councillor John Taylor
Councillor Matthew McLoughlin
Councillor Will Simpson
Councillor Susan Lee-Richards
Jane Emery [Co-Optee]
Garry Kitchen [Co-Optee]

Work Programme 2024/25

During the 2024/25 municipal year the Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Panel focused on climate impact and delivery of net zero targets as the key areas of consideration (‘golden threads) when scrutinizing the following issues:

- Cleansing Performance Update
- Statutory Food Hygiene Plan 2024 – 2025
- Statutory Health & Safety Plan 2024 – 2025
- Public Space Protection Orders
- Lane Rental Scheme
- Kirklees Statement of Licensing Policy under the Licensing Act 2003
- Highway Safety Strategy
- Annual Review of Flood Risk Management
- Severe Weather Debrief Report January 2025
- 2-year Highway Capital Plan 2024-25 and 2025-26

The Panel also met in informal session to consider the following issues and give early input into policy development:

- Future of Bereavement Services
- Air Quality Update (Action Plan, Strategy and Annual Status Report)
- Fleet Replacement Programme and O Licence compliance (to include link to particulate matter impact on air quality)
- Kirklees Enforcement Policy
- Waste Procurement Update

Committee Highlights

Cleansing Performance

At the meeting held on 14th August 2024, the Panel considered an update on Cleansing Performance, focusing on improving waste collection efficiency, addressing access challenges, and enhancing communication strategies.

The update had been requested by the Panel in response to reported missed bin collections and set out the measures implemented within the waste collection service to improve performance.

Key Findings:

- Improved Collection Performance: The implementation of area-based working in North Kirklees alongside strong governance and performance monitoring had led to the achievement of target collection rates.

- Challenges of Restricted Access: Issues arising from narrow roads, increased home-based parking, and overhanging vegetation were noted, with the need for new approaches to mitigate these barriers.
- Future Planning for Waste Collection: The need for a trigger point to assess housing growth impacts on waste collection within existing budget constraints was recognised.
- Market Review for Narrow Track Vehicles: Due to the discontinuation of key vehicle models, the possibility of investigating a joint tender with neighbouring local authorities to improve accessibility was recommended.
- Behavioural Change and Education: The importance of educating communities, especially students, was emphasised, including engagement through freshers fairs and collaboration with student housing agencies.
- Combatting Waste Contamination: Future updates were requested regarding contamination reduction efforts and were to include information on modern technology's role in further improvements.
- Recognition of Elected Members' Support: Thanks should be extended to ward councillors for facilitating communication between residents and the Council on waste collection issues, and it was recommended that Councillors should be informed in advance of re-routing in the South to improve engagement with residents.
- Learning from Best Performers: The Council should learn from the best practices of high-performing waste collection authorities nationwide, and the feasibility of implementing food waste collection should be further explored through engagement with the LGA.
- Use of Data-Driven Monitoring: A heat map should be used to monitor performance and track missed collections by area.
- Community Engagement and Communications: Aspiring to a delivery-style real-time communication approach, like those used by logistics companies, was recommended alongside the use of a wider campaign addressing blocked access issues. It was also recommended that a communications initiative should illustrate the journey of a recycled item, demonstrating the tangible impact of responsible waste disposal.

Outcomes

The Environment Service extended thanks to all councillors for their support on waste collection issues, and in June 2025 the approach to inform councillors of round changes was implemented. Additionally, ward specific information was circulated to specific ward councillors to support with any enquiries.

Since the meeting, the team had been asked to engage with the university to explore participation in this year's freshers fair, but over the past 12 months, no specific joint initiatives with the university had been identified.

The team's primary focus during this period had been on addressing contamination issues in the northern part of the district and an update on Combatting Waste Contamination will be presented to the Panel alongside the 2026 Waste Strategy in Autumn 2025.

Engagement around the introduction of food waste collection was underway, including ongoing discussions with the Local Government Association and the council's engagement and consultation team.

As recommended, a heat map was in development by the IT team as part of the Customer and Access Programme, aimed at tracking missed collections geographically. There was a plan to launch this alongside other digital and web developments in October. Benchmarking activities were currently being carried out through the Customer and Access Programme and findings will be available for sharing in summer 2025.

A communications and education campaign will be launched to illustrate the lifecycle of a recycled item—from collection to recycling or reuse—demonstrating the individual's impact through correct recycling. This will be integrated into the communications plan accompanying Simpler Recycling later this year.

Call-in of Executive Director Decision – Household Waste Recycling Centre Efficiency Savings

At the meeting held on 10th September 2024, the Panel reviewed the call-in request regarding the decision taken by the Executive Director for Place, Growth and Regeneration on 16th August 2024 concerning the Waste Disposal Contract and efficiency savings at Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs).

Outcomes

- Concerns Around Consultation: The Panel noted the absence of consultation with ward councillors and residents before the decision to close the Nab Lane HWRC site.
- Issues of Openness: Clarity regarding the potential closure of HWRC sites was lacking in earlier reports to Cabinet, creating concerns about transparency in the decision-making process.
- Limited Consideration of Alternatives: No details were provided on alternative options to HWRC closure or the rationale for dismissing them.

Recommendations:

- Referral to Cabinet for Determination: Due to the lack of clarity during the delegation process, the Panel recommended that the Decision Maker refer the matter back to Cabinet for review.
- Improved Stakeholder Consultation: Future decisions on waste disposal contracts must involve early engagement with ward councillors and service users.
- Transparency in Decision-Making: All potential alternative options, including why they were discounted, should be made available in future decision-making processes.

Learning Points:

- The Panel further noted as learning points that (i) consultation with ward members should occur earlier in the process and, if necessary, in confidence and (ii) if information is shared outside the control of the Decision Maker, the decision should be paused to allow adequate consultation.

Public Space Protection Orders

At the meeting held on 20th November 2025, the Panel reviewed an update on the revision of the existing Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) and the introduction of new measures to address emerging issues.

The Panel were advised that the proposed orders included the introduction of restrictions on bird feeding, loitering, unauthorised temporary structures, and town centre nuisance. A total of 371 responses were received to the public consultation, with predominantly positive feedback supporting the changes.

Key Findings:

- Concerns About Clarity: There were concerns that one of the new PSPOs appeared to be targeting homeless individuals though this was not the intention. It was recommended that it be made clearer in the report that the 'Use of Temporary Structures Without the Landowner's Permission' Public Space Protection Order wasn't aimed at targeting homelessness in Kirklees.
- Enforcement Challenges: The Panel explored whether the existing number of enforcement officers was sufficient, and were reassured that support would come from police and community partners. The Panel further requested that data on issued penalties and their recovery rates be shared with the Panel.
- Balancing Support and Enforcement: It was also highlighted that greater emphasis should be placed on how PSPOs work alongside support to vulnerable individuals as well as enforcement.
- Monitoring and Review Process: Plans were outlined to assess displacement effects following PSPO implementation, and the Panel recommended that a formal process to assess displacement effects after implementation should be included in the report.

Outcomes

The data showing the number of Fixed Penalty Notices Issued and the rate of recovery or the reason for the cancellation was shared with the Panel in December 2024 by email. It was also noted that the reasons for the cancellation were due to either, persons not providing a statement or the wrong information being given to the officer at the time. A discussion around the enforcement of fixed penalty notices and the statistics provided was included as part of an informal update to the Panel 21st March 2025.

Proposed Lane Rental Scheme

At the meeting held on 20th November 2025, the Panel reviewed the Kirklees Lane Rental Scheme.

The Panel were informed that the scheme aimed to give the Council greater control over roadworks to improve traffic flow, air quality, safety, and will regulate the timing of roadworks to minimize disruption and enhance efficiency.

Key Findings:

- Panel Support for the Scheme: The Panel welcomed the flexibility offered within the sensitive streets network but recommended that there be clear communication on Street Selection and that the selection criteria for roads included in the Lane Rental Scheme should be shared with all Council members.
- Revenue Use Restrictions: The Panel were informed that surplus funds could only be reinvested into highways transport initiatives rather than general budget use. In response the Panel recommended that there be strong governance around revenue allocation and to ensure any surplus funds were invested in relevant transport and road safety projects.

- Balanced Stakeholder Engagement: The Panel highlighted that work promoters must consider business needs when scheduling projects to minimise disruption.

Outcomes

Since the meeting officers advised that the process of identifying a street for inclusion in the proposed Lane Rental network was determined in two stages. Inclusion factors included:

- Traffic volume and classification of vehicles using that route (HGVs/Bus)
- Availability of suitable alternative routes (including highway safety concerns)
- Likelihood of works being carried out on those routes in the near future
- Optimisation of the network length (10% of the total highway network length) to maximise the spread and benefit of the controls.

Further details on the selection process were shared with the Panel in July 2025 and with the whole council thereafter.

It has also been advised that Highways officers will be commencing the statutory consultation on the lane rental scheme and list of streets in July 2025 with the intention of making an application to Department of Transport for these powers in September 2025. If approved, the Lane Rental Scheme should be operational from summer 2026. Highways officers will review the lane rental network regularly in the future.

Annual Review of Flood Risk Management Activities

At the meeting held on 12th March 2025 the Panel considered the Annual Review of Flood Risk Management Activities. This followed significant flooding on New Year's Day 2025 which affected businesses and homes and highlighted the need for proactive flood management.

Key Findings:

- Natural Flood Management (NFM): The Panel welcomed funding for new projects aimed at improving biodiversity and climate resilience and it was recommended that Effectiveness Monitoring of NFM Measures be implemented going forwards including ongoing assessments to track flood mitigation improvements.
- Mental Health and Wellbeing Support: In recognising the psychological impact of flooding, initiatives had been developed to enhance community resilience and recovery. The initiative was welcomed, and an offer was made by a Panel member to take up mental health first aid training.
- Flood Spotter Programme: It was noted that network of trained community-based responders had been expanded to provide timely flood support.
- Enhanced Resident Engagement: Further efforts should be made to encourage households in flood-prone areas to adopt Property Level Protection measures.
- Improved Trash Screen Maintenance: Identified screens requiring upgrades should be addressed with Environment Agency funding.
- Section 106 Funding Utilization: Early engagement with developers should continue to secure contributions for local flood resilience.
- Climate Adaptation Strategies: The Panel emphasised the increasing importance of preparing for extreme weather events in future planning.

Outcomes

In response to concerns raised by the Panel, Flockton First School was visited by officers and the trash screens were found to be offering no concern at the time. Officers also met with Councillor Martyn Bolt to follow up on concerns and questions raised and Panel Member, Councillor David Longstaff, received mental health first aid training.

Severe Weather Debrief Report

At the meeting held on 16th April 2025 the Panel reviewed the response to the severe weather events in early 2025, recognising the efforts of multiple services in handling flooding and prolonged snow and ice conditions. The Panel then made several recommendations to strengthen the severe weather response ensuring preparedness and support for affected communities.

Outcomes

- Resident Engagement and Support Improvements: Engagement with residents during severe weather events was highlighted as important in carrying out an effective response and enhancements to the Council's non-emergency online flooding form were proposed to encourage timely reporting. Increased welfare checks and engagement strategies were also noted as a key part of the approach to support those affected by severe weather, especially vulnerable residents.
- Challenges in Gritting Services and New Housing Estates: Issues around gritting coverage, particularly near key health and respite centres, were highlighted. There were also concerns around the building of new housing estates and the capacity for gritting and it was recommended that discussions be held with the Planning Department to assess whether new housing estates will be treated differently under gritting policies.
- Snow Warden Survey Feedback: Questions were asked around the decision not to involve the snow wardens in the response and were advised that this was above what was expected of snow wardens in their voluntary capacity. The Panel noted the response but requested findings from the next Snow Warden survey be shared with the Panel.
- Panel Appreciation: The Panel praised all services involved in the emergency response for their dedication during very challenging conditions and further requested that the Winter Policy should be added to the 2025/26 work programme.
- Following the meeting colleagues in the Planning Department (Highways Development Management) were consulted with about gritting new housing estates and the full response was shared with the Panel by email in July 2025.

Highways Safety Update

At the meeting held 22nd January 2025 the Panel considered an update on Highways Safety setting out the latest progress in highways safety, reaffirming the Council's commitment to Vision Zero by 2040.

Officers were commended for their efforts in meeting interim targets, and the importance of educating young people on road safety was highlighted. The Panel also made recommendations with the aim of ensuring continuous monitoring, accountability, and data-driven improvements in highways safety across Kirklees.

Key Findings:

- Commitment to Vision Zero: The Panel noted that the ambition remained to eliminate all road deaths and serious injuries through a Safe System approach, and that the formation of the Kirklees Strategic Vision Zero Group would provide intelligence-led guidance to support Vision Zero objectives across various departments and agencies. The Panel further requested that future progress reports on strategy implementation should continue to be shared with the Panel to enable ongoing oversight from scrutiny.
- Strategic Framework: The Panel noted that the West Yorkshire Vision Zero initiative, launched in August 2024 and integrated community involvement, education, and data-led strategies.
- Casualties Data and Impact Assessment of Capital Schemes: The Panel requested that (i) the data showing the link between capital scheme implementations and reductions in incidents and that (ii) a full report detailing casualties by age be presented the Panel.
- Panel Representation: An invitation was made for one Panel member to sit on the Kirklees Vision Zero Board. The Panel welcomed the invitation, and it was agreed that the process for appointing a Panel member be confirmed.

Outcomes

The data requested was shared with the Panel in July 2025 along with further information with regards to data analysis. It was also reported that in all (except for one) location, capital schemes prevented further collisions at each location in the preceding 12 months post construction. Furthermore, whilst the one location did have one slight collision the data showed the area outperformed the predicted 50% prevention figure agreed for all schemes.

In regard to Panel representation on the Kirklees Vision Zero Board, the Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Panel will also appoint a member of the Panel to sit on the Board at a future meeting of the Panel.

Highways 2-Year Capital Plan Allocation 2025/26 and 2026/27

At the meeting held on 16th April 2025, the Panel considered the Highways Capital Plan Allocation for 2025/26 and 2026/27, which outlined a detailed programme of improvements aimed at maintaining road infrastructure, supporting safety, and advancing Kirklees' climate ambitions. The Panel were informed that the plan was supported by the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) and additional grants, ensuring a strong financial foundation for highways projects.

The Panel made a number of recommendations to ensure the Highways Capital Plan supported safe, sustainable, and future-ready infrastructure for Kirklees.

Key Findings:

- Innovation in Highways Management: The Panel welcomed news that AI-driven solutions were being explored to assess road conditions, enhance network management, and improve infrastructure maintenance.
- Improved Roadworks Coordination: The Panel praised the One Network platform, which was free for the public to use and provided real-time updates on roadworks, reducing

congestion and helping residents stay informed. It was recommended that consideration be given to linking the platform to My Kirklees Accounts to improve accessibility for residents.
- Commitment to Climate and Safety Goals: The Panel acknowledged the importance of aligning infrastructure projects with the Kirklees' Vision Zero strategy and recommended that the report should clearly reflect the Vision Zero objectives. The Panel also requested that Kirklees' progress toward net zero targets be shared with the Panel and this data was circulated 17th April 2025.

Outcomes:

Since the meeting, Officers had advised that;

- Recent expansion of AI, and its ability to deliver near real-time insights, had significantly reduced the need for journeys to assess service requests and enquiries, further enhancing operational efficiency and contributing to carbon reduction efforts.
- A request had been made to the council's Digital Services Team to ask if the link to One. Network can be added to the standard 'My Kirklees Account' page. The quick link was made operational as of July 2025 on the My Kirklees account as requested by Scrutiny.
- Vision Zero was an integral part of the Highways Safety priorities and the Safety Team were comfortable that the current programme had been developed with this approach in mind but recognised that there was more to be done across Highways and the wider Council. Officers agreed to ensure that for next year's Capital plan report that the Vison Zero target and performance indicators were embedded within the Highways Safety section of the report.
- The Kirklees Vision Zero Board (operational as of July 2025) was tasked with embedding the Vision Zero ethos in all Council Services and encouraging discussion on individual, as well as corporate responsibilities, towards road safety across the highway network.
- The Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Panel will be represented on the Kirklees Vision Zero Board.

Comments

Councillor Andrew Cooper

It has been a useful and productive year for Environment and Climate Change Panel. I have been pleased with the contributions from Members and co-optees throughout the year.

We have had a busy work programme, and I am grateful to officers who have put time into producing reports and answering our questions.

The new Lane Rental scheme could provide a useful source of funding for innovative highways and transport measures. What was particularly pleasing was to have an item that we could scrutinise at the policy formulation stage. This provided an opportunity to make suggestions and influence the scheme going forward.

We had a call in to scrutinise the closure of a Household Waste and Recycling Centre. Members got to grips with the rationale for the closure but importantly had the opportunity to question the process by which the decision was made. An important part of Scrutiny is to hold the Executive to account for the decisions it takes.

Another highlight was our work looking at Public Space Protection Orders. We were clear that PSPOs cannot operate in isolation from the support we offer to the troubled and vulnerable people who are sometimes subject to them. The wider context that such policies operate in should be shown to have been considered.

My thanks to Jodie Harris for her support to myself and to the Panel this year. Thanks also to all the Kirklees officers who have helped us gain insight into their valuable work and hopefully we have provided some useful insight for them also.

Councillor David Longstaff – Committee Member

As a member of the Panel, I want to highlight the Panel's work across a vast range of environmental issues, and I felt that the check and challenge given on issues including waste flooding and highways was particularly effective

Paul Farndale – Strategic Partnership Lead for Flood Management & Drainage (LLFA)

This year, scrutiny of Flood Risk moved to the Environment & Climate Change Panel Members of the Panel were engaged with our projects and there was a specific request by Councillor Cooper to discuss property level protection. I really do welcome this interaction, and the fair and constructive challenge given by the Panel and look at it as an opportunity to better engage with Members

Calderdale and Kirklees Joint Health Scrutiny Committee 2024/25

Committee Membership

Kirklees Committee Membership
Councillor Elizabeth Smaje [Joint Chair]
Councillor Jane Rylah
Councillor Ashleigh Robinson
Councillor Jo Lawson

Committee Highlights

During the 2024/54 Municipal Year, the Committee continued its focus on the reconfiguration of services at Calderdale and Huddersfield NHS Foundation Trust (CHFT) and alongside this, Maternity Services provided by the Trust. The Committee held three formal meetings in June and October 2024, and March 2025.

At its meeting in June 2024, the Committee received an update on the opening of the new Accident and Emergency (A&E) department at Huddersfield Royal Infirmary (HRI) which included the journey through the construction and the impact that the opening of the new A&E has had on staff and patients.

CHFT's vision for the future include continued investment in existing buildings at HRI and additional wards, two new operating theatres, a new A&E and a Children's A&E at Calderdale Royal Hospital (CRH).

The Committee also considered data and information from the Yorkshire Ambulance Service which included transfer times from each post code in Kirklees and Calderdale to HRI and CRH, transfer times between the two hospitals and the capacity to transfer urgently between a birthing unit at HRI and CRH.

The Committee meeting in October 2024 considered a further reconfiguration update and noted that draft full business case for the reconfiguration would be completed by Autumn 2025.

At its meeting in March 2025 the Committee discussed Maternity Services with Members being updated on the current and future maternity services offer across Calderdale, Kirklees, and Wakefield. The Committee will continue to receive updates about any re-opening of a stand-alone birthing unit at HRI throughout the 2025/26 Municipal Year.

A further update regarding the reconfiguration at CRH was received at the March 2025 meeting, with the Committee being advised that the construction of the multi-storey car park, maternity floor, catheterisation laboratory and plant room had begun, with the new clinical building, main entrance and new clinical building at CRH progressing through 2026 to 2029.

Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committees 2024/25

Committee Membership

Kirklees Committee Membership
Councillor Elizabeth Smaje [Chair]
Councillor Jane Rylah

Committee Highlights

The JHOSC met four times during 2024/25 and covered a variety of issues that had implications for the West Yorkshire region.

The JHOSC received updates and proposals about strategic issues being considered by the West Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (ICB). Issues covered included: a change to eligibility criteria for Non-emergency Patient Transport Services, the 2024/25 Financial Plan, Maternity and Neonatal System, Equality Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, Suicide Prevention, Life Expectancy, YAS Delivery of Services, Specialist Commissioning, Cancer Early Diagnosis and Work and Health Plan and Programmes.

The JHOSC and ICB approved a Memorandum of Understanding which promoted the continued close working relationship between the two, and to ensure that the JHOSC received all the relevant information required to scrutinise strategic proposals of the ICB.

Older People's Mental Health Services Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2024/25

Committee Membership

Kirklees Committee Membership
Councillor Elizabeth Smaje
Councillor John Lawson
Councillor Gwen Lowe
Councillor Andrew Cooper

Committee Highlights

During the 2024/25 Municipal Year, the Committee continued to focus on the transformation of Older People's Mental Health Services across Calderdale, Kirklees and Wakefield. Two formal Committee meetings took place in August and November 2024.

At its meeting in August 2024, the Committee received a summary of the consultation report and Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) from South West Yorkshire Partnership Foundation Trust (SWYPFT) and NHS West Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (ICB). The Committee were asked to provide comment, assurance and feedback on the process and findings which would be included as part of a five-week deliberation period to identify the most appropriate option choice, before returning to the Committee to seek support of their final decision.

At its meeting on the 6th November 2024, the Committee was asked to consider the decision-making business case and to provide assurance that the proposed recommendation (option 1a) had been made, fully considering the consultation findings, and that the Committee was in support of the recommended option being implemented. Following some discussion and questioning, the Committee agreed it was in support of option 1a being implemented.

A further meeting will take place to update the Committee in relation to Workforce Planning, the Update Business Case and Implementation Plans.

West Yorkshire Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2024/25

Committee Membership

Council	Member	*Deputy*
Bradford	Cllr Ralph Berry	*Cllr Safina Kauser*
	Cllr Paul Godwin	*Cllr Carol Thirkill*
	Cllr Bob Felstead	*Cllr David Nunns*
	Cllr Matt Edwards	*Cllr Anna Watson*
Calderdale	Cllr Mike Barnes (until April 2025) Cllr Jonathan Timbers (from April 2025)	*Cllr Helen Brundell*
	Cllr Geraldine Carter	*Cllr Peter Hunt*
Kirklees	Cllr Harry McCarthy	*Cllr Jane Rylah*
	Cllr Richard Smith	*Cllr Mark Thompson*
	Cllr Andrew Marchington	*Cllr John Lawson*
Leeds	Cllr Kate Haigh	*Cllr Jane Dowson*
	Cllr David Jenkins	*Cllr Jordan Bowden*
	Cllr Barry Anderson	*Cllr Matthew Robinson*
	Cllr Andy Rontree	*Cllr Mahalia France-Mir*
Wakefield	Cllr Richard Forster	*Cllr Julie Craig*
	Cllr Betty Rhodes	*Cllr Deb Nicholls*
York	Cllr Dave Merrett	*Cllr Conrad Whitcroft*

This year was the first year of a new single overarching scrutiny system which consolidated the previous three scrutiny committees covering economy, transport and corporate issues into one.

The Scrutiny Committee in 2024-25 inherited the work programmes of its three predecessors and took on board the key decisions in the corporate plan and the Mayor's Pledges in selecting an ambitious and comprehensive work programme, consisting of numerous sub-topics under the below themes:

- Corporate readiness
- Monitoring performance and delivery
- Financial planning
- Devolution and governance
- Bus reform
- Mass Transit
- Asset management

- Climate Plan
- Building and retrofitting homes
- Economic strategy
- Skills system
- Access to culture
- Rural issues

Throughout the year several new approaches to scrutiny were introduced including inputting earlier in the decision-making process, greater emphasis on reporting scrutiny's work in public and focusing strongly on demonstrating impact – which the full report outlined https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/about-us/governance-and-transparency/scrutiny/

A greater use of officer briefings was also used to maintain overview and 'triage' initial scrutiny enquiries. These initial enquiries led to working groups on the Climate Plan, Rural Issues, Devolution and Bus Reform being established, and workshops on the reopening of Bradford Interchange and the new budget and financial strategy, which enabled smaller groups of members to work together to investigate issues in more detail, seek strong assurances on areas of concern and make recommendations on improvements.

In addition, Scrutiny also ramped up its direct engagement with external experts and stakeholders to hear from them directly on areas it scrutinised. This included the chair of the West Yorkshire Business Board, representatives from business organisations, experts from think tanks, the Local Government Association and the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny and more 'junior' but technically expert officers.

Overall, the implementation of the new scrutiny system has been a strong step in the right direction, enabling scrutiny members to monitor and keep an overview of complex crosscutting topics, follow up on enquiries into specific areas of concern and make an impact on improving transparency and decision-making processes.

The Scrutiny Committee also directly questioned the Mayor of West Yorkshire multiple times during the year on her impact as Mayor and delivery of her electoral pledges and the Combined Authority's priorities.

Contact the Governance Team at:

In Writing: Governance and Commissioning, PO Box 1720, Huddersfield, HD1 9EL

By email: **Scrutiny.governance@Kirklees.gov.uk**

By telephone: 01484 221000 [Ask for The Governance Team]

X: Kirklees Council (@KirkleesCouncil) / X

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