Kirklees COUNCIL

Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2025/26

Contents

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee 4
Committee Membership 4
Work Programme 5
Committee Highlights 5
Leader of Council, Corporate and Finance Portfolio Holders' Priorities 6
Financial Monitoring – Budget proposals 7
Quarterly Financial Monitoring and Medium-Term Financial Strategy: 8
Overview of risk and performance management 9
Council Plan 10
Strategic Intelligence Assessment and Kirklees Communities Partnership Plan 11
Tourism Strategy 12
Physical Activity In North Kirklees 13
Looking forward to 2026/27 13
Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel 14
Panel Membership 14
Work Programme 15
Panel Highlights 15
Looking forward to 2026/27 17
Comments 18
Growth and Regeneration Scrutiny Panel 20
Panel Membership 20
Work Programme 21
Panel Highlights 21
Looking forward to 2026/27 24
Children's Scrutiny Panel 25
Panel Membership 25
Work Programme 26
Panel Highlights 26
Environment and Climate Change Panel 38
Panel Membership 38
Work Programme 39
Committee Highlights 39
Looking forward to 2026/27 47
West Yorkshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee 49
Committee Membership 49

Committee Highlights 49
Calderdale and Kirklees Joint Health Scrutiny Committee 51
Committee Membership 51
Committee Highlights 51
West Yorkshire Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee 54
Contact the Governance Team: 57

Chair’s Comments

I would like to thank everyone for their work in scrutiny during the 2025-26 municipal year. We need to continue to build on that work during this year ensuring that scrutiny remains strong in Kirklees which will include continuing with pre-decision scrutiny wherever possible, scrutinising projects and policies as they develop, and scrutinise decisions of the Administration.

Being a critical friend, it is important that overview and scrutiny is seen as an integral part of decision making in Kirklees as well as on a West Yorkshire footprint.

Councillor Liz Smaje

Chair of Scrutiny

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

Committee Membership

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

Work Programme

- Leader, Finance and Corporate Portfolio Holders' Priorities
- Financial Management of the Council including the Budget Proposals for 2026/27
- 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 including Transformation Projects and Activities
- Corporate Risk – Quarterly Reports
- Corporate Peer Challenge – Action Plan
- Devolution and Impact on Kirklees
- Customer Service – Integrated Library Hubs
- Tourism Strategy – Pre-Decision Scrutiny
- Physical Activity in North Kirklees – Next Steps
- Member Development Framework
- Procurement Strategy - Update
- Corporate Safeguarding – Progress further to the statutory Organisational Safeguarding Assessment in 2025

In addition to the formal meetings of the Committee, an informal session took place in July, to keep Members updated in respect of the Communications Strategy and Business Plan. Members made comments and suggestions to be taken on board for future practice.

The Chair of Scrutiny held briefings during 2025/26, with the Service Director – Finance (quarterly), the Deputy Chief Executive (six-weekly) and the Head of People Service. Regular meetings also took place with the Leader and the Cabinet Members for the Finance and Corporate Portfolios.

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. This information facilitated the Chair and Lead Members to maintain an overview, to identify any areas that may be of interest in terms of scrutiny 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.

Committee Highlights

Visits

During the year Members visited:

Tommy's Lounge (July 2025)

This was undertaken further to a report in respect of the Armed Forces Covenant (AFC) (at the meeting in May 2025), where Members learned about this facility, in the centre of Huddersfield. It had been developed by a veteran, who was also a member of the AFC Board, to provide a safe space where veterans would feel comfortable and could meet to talk to each other freely.

The Chair reported back that this had proved to be a very interesting and worthwhile visit and he had requested that updates be provided in respect of the bid for funding to develop the facility into a ‘one-stop shop’ to assist veterans.

Project Search (November 2025)

On the recommendation of the Portfolio Holder, Members visited Project Search; a supported internship programme for young people aged 18–24 with a learning disability and/or autism, which was delivered in partnership with Kirklees College, REAL Employment, and other local organisations. It aimed to help support young people to make a successful transition from education into paid employment through a combination of classroom learning, job coaching, and work placements with local employers.

The visit included spending some time with the current interns and hearing success stories from a previous cohort who had been in employment for over 2 years since graduating from the programme.

The Committee considered that the visit provided an excellent background to the project and offered a real insight into the valuable work taking place. Hearing directly from the interns about their experiences was inspiring and their confidence, enthusiasm, and commitment really stood out. It was a thoroughly worthwhile and uplifting visit, and it highlighted the real difference the project is making.

The feedback from the interns included the following comments:

“The visit on Friday was really enjoyable, stressful and nerve-wracking and I enjoyed doing the presentation but was nervous about it because I'm not used to doing presentations in general or standing in front of a group of people.”

“I felt brave and positive and I went first and I just got it done with and I really liked giving the presentation to the councillors.”

“On Friday when we made PowerPoints to show the council in the base room I was shy and nervous to show my PowerPoint but then I showed my PowerPoint and talked about my rotation, what tasks I have to do and my dream job and after that I was alright.”

“On Friday I was scared of meeting new people but I really enjoyed doing my presentation in front of Council so they know what I do down at the Town Hall.”

Huddersfield Library Hub/Customer Service Centre (February 2026)

The Committee considered a report in relation to early learning from the ten integrated Library Hubs across Kirklees and how this was informing the future development of the service model and visited the Huddersfield Hub.

Leader of Council, Corporate and Finance Portfolio Holders' Priorities

In July 2025, Councillor Carole Pattison, the Leader of Council and the Portfolio Holders for Finance, Councillor Graham Turner, and Corporate, Councillor Nosheen Dad, were welcomed to the meeting to talk about their priorities for 2025/26 and to provide an update in respect of recent outcomes.

Councillor Pattison explained that:

- The vision, eight shared outcomes, and four partnership strategies remained the same. The vision for Kirklees was to combine a sustainable economy with a great quality of life for families and communities and address inequalities.
- Delivery of the four priorities set out in the 2025/26 Council Plan, alongside partners, would help to achieve this vision:
  - Getting the basics right
  - Protecting the vulnerable and achieving inclusion
  - Thriving people and communities
  - Local economic growth
- Recent progress and achievements under each priority were highlighted.

Councillor Turner provided an overview of the key priorities across the Finance and Regeneration Portfolio, the most important of which was the delivery of a balanced budget for 2026/2027, with proposals being presented to Council in February 2026. He explained that:

- The three-year financial settlement from the Government would aid the development of a better longer-term financial strategy and the Council was in a good position to move forward.
- The aim was to review all items in the Council's Capital Plan by September 2026.
- Grants and pooling opportunities for investment would continue to be sought.

Responses were given to questions and comments from the Committee across a range of topics including:

- Improvements in air quality.
- The new specialist schools and additional provision of places for children with SEND and the plans in place to ensure the necessary resources to address the growing need in this area. The financial benefits of expanding such provision within the district.
- The quality of the service provided for people with dementia and their relatives and carers by Knowl Park House, in Mirfield, noting that such provision could delay the need for people to go into residential care and that there was need for more such provision.
- Residents' understanding of 'getting the basics right' and the work underway on a transformation project focusing on customer expectations.
- The importance of the role and contribution of Elected Members both in terms of their knowledge of activities and groups in their communities, and the leadership and promotion of events.

Outcomes

The Committee requested a report on the work being done in respect of 'getting the basics right' be added to the work programme and recommended that this work should include a strong focus on effective and timely communication.

Financial Monitoring – Budget proposals

In January 2026, the Committee held a meeting focussed on the budget proposals for 2026/27, in advance of their consideration by the Cabinet and Council.

The Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive gave an introduction to the budget proposals and the Council Plan.

This was followed by a presentation by the Portfolio Holder for Finance and the Service Director – Finance focussed on the financial settlement and budget headlines.

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 and other members of Council who were in attendance.

Outcomes

The feedback from the Committee was considered when finalising and preparing the final proposed budget as presented to Cabinet and Council. A summary of the points raised was included in the relevant reports to both Cabinet and Council and members were asked to take this into consideration when taking the final decisions on the budget.

Quarterly Financial Monitoring and Medium-Term Financial Strategy:

The Committee considered each of the quarterly corporate financial monitoring reports at meetings in July, September and December 2025 and March 2025.

On each occasion the Committee was taken through the detail of the current position and the revenue variances and pressures affecting each directorate; the Housing Revenue Account (HRA); the Capital Plan and the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and the 'Safety Valve Agreement'

Issues discussed included;

- The work being undertaken to develop more in-house provision which would help to address issues with the cost of external residential placements for looked after children. and additional budget investment was going into an edge of care service and fostering.
- Addressing the budget pressures arising from rising demand in adult health and children's services.
- Investment was proposed in the budget for 2026/27 to mitigate increases in demand and inflation.
- Level of reserves.
- The position in respect of the DSG deficit, the Government's commitment to addressing 90% of the historical deficit, and the work being undertaken locally to reduce the in-year deficit. It was noted that the Council had been commended by the DfE for its work on the Safety Valve.
- The Government consultation on a White Paper in relation to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) which was anticipated to contain a wide range of reforms.
- Rates of borrowing and the approach in utilising a mix of short-term and long-term borrowing to reduce and mitigate risk. It was considered that the level of risk was lower than in previous years and that an anticipated fall in interest rates would improve the treasury management position.
- The cost of the delay in the transfer of the care homes.
- Discussions were ongoing with the NHS in terms of funding of placement costs at care homes.

- The £9.9 million re-profiling of the Capital Plan had been undertaken since the July rollover report and had contributed to reducing borrowing needs.

In September 2025 the Committee received a presentation focussing on:

The principles of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy which set out the financial framework for the Council's budget planning for 2026/27 to 2030/31. The discussion included the funding assumptions used in developing the strategy and

- Analysis of the anticipated budget gap for 2025-26 and the measures to be taken to address the gap.

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 with 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 of their Panel and to allow them to pick up on any items within their remit that may require further attention from scrutiny..

Overview of risk and performance management

At meetings in July, September and December 2025 and March 2026 the Committee considered reports in respect of the quarterly corporate risk reports and performance management which set out progress against the 2024/25 Council Plan priorities and performance against the 2025/26 Council Key Measures.

In December an update was also provided as provided in relation to the range of transformation programmes and initiatives designed to deliver the ambitions set out in the Council Plan.

Issues discussed included -

- The measures being taken to respond to the issues around looked after children and placements
- In relation to any changes in political structure further to the elections in May there was a clear, documented and established governance framework in place.
- Analysis of Councillor Enquiries data was being undertaken and this information would be brought forward in due course. The aim was to try and reduce the number of repeat queries. It was suggested that it would be helpful for Councillors to be able to check outstanding enquiries online, perhaps through a dashboard tool, to help them manage their casework.
- The performance measures in terms of protecting the vulnerable. It was accepted that it might be useful to bring all the relevant information together in order to assess the progress being made and inform the Anti-Poverty Strategy.
- The slight increase in levels of staff sickness which may be due, in part, to better recording as a result of a focus on this issue. In areas where levels were high, action plans to address the issue had been requested. It was noted that early access to support could be helpful in preventing people going off sick. Monitoring was undertaken both from the perspective of Employee Healthcare and through managers using the sickness absence procedures. Work related stress was not concentrated within any particular service areas. It was acknowledged that it could become an issue in areas that were undergoing significant service change.
- In respect of collection rates for Council Tax, a slight decrease was anticipated associated with changes to support.

- The improvements in respect of the timescales for Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) was welcomed and the importance of ensuring that this continued was stressed. Changes had been made in terms of customer communication, to try and ensure that assessments were completed and that clients were kept updated as much as possible.
- In relation to whether the performance indicators were able to demonstrate outcomes and improvements in the quality of life of residents, part of the data development agenda was to consider if there were more appropriate measures to accurately reflect residents' experience.
- The rise in adult social care cases and the use of an early intervention and prevention approach.
- The increase in fly-tipping and that a comprehensive strategy, including media campaigns, CCTV, convictions and community engagement should assist in addressing this issue.
- Work was being undertaken with schools to provide the support that was needed for children through working in clusters, additional SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) places were being provided and two new schools were progressing. The Authority's strategy was recognised as being good practice.
- The sustainability and management of trees planted as part of the White Rose Forest initiative. There were targets in place for Kirklees and the district was performing well, though long-term maintenance was a separate issue; if they were on Council land they would be maintained by the relevant service(s).
- The reduction in the use of temporary accommodation was welcomed. In respect of plans to reduce the numbers further, efforts were being made to increase the amount of suitable housing stock and thus reduce reliance on bed and breakfast accommodation, with the first priority being families.
- It would be a good idea to have an 'opportunities register', particularly for areas such as climate change. The co-benefits of action on climate change should be emphasised, such as reduced fuel bills, improved air quality and job creation. Issues with staffing and recruitment in such roles could potentially limit the Council's ability to take opportunities for external funding.

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.

Council Plan

In early December the Committee received a presentation in respect of the key components of the next Council Plan for discussion and feedback.

Questions and comments were invited from Committee Members, with the following issues being covered:

- The move towards developing a plan covering a three-year period which had been aided by the implementation of a three-year financial settlement. This would assist in forward planning and allow improved communication of the Council's plans across the whole range of priorities over the longer term and how it planned to build on activity and progress year on year.

- It was anticipated that the plan would continue to be reviewed on an annual basis and that would involve a similar process in terms of consultation, including engagement with scrutiny. It would also be informed by all the available information in respect of financial reporting, performance monitoring and transformation activity.
- A significant level of engagement with partners had taken place. This had resulted in feedback in respect of the shared outcomes and the vision, for example setting it over a particular timeframe. It had also made clear that partners were keen to work collaboratively on longer-term opportunities.

Outcomes

The feedback from the Committee was considered in the further development of the Council Plan 2026-29; and the move towards a 3- year plan period, as previously discussed with scrutiny, was welcomed.

The Council Plan was submitted to Council on 25th February 2026 and approved for incorporation within the Council's Policy Framework. The Committee's feedback was set out in the report.

Strategic Intelligence Assessment and Kirklees Communities Partnership Plan

On 27th February 2026 the Committee considered a report which provided:

- A high-level overview of the 2025 Strategic Intelligence Assessment (SIA) and an outline of the proposed Communities' Plan priorities for 2026/7-29.
- An outline of an approach to develop the new Safer Kirklees Community Safety Plan (CSP) for 2026/27 –29.

A discussion also took place in respect of the issue of the misuse of fireworks in Kirklees and the multi-agency approach, in response to the motion of Council on 17th December 2025

The Portfolio Holder for Education and Communities (also 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 and Rescue Service, the Service Director for Communities and Access Services, the Head of Communities, the Head of Public Protection. Kirklees Probation Service, Kirklees Highways, Safer Kirklees and the Data and Insight Enablement Lead for Adults and Communities.

The following issues were covered:

- The high level priorities in the Partnership Plan aligned with expectations in relation to the issues raised at ward level and the work to be done on measurables was welcomed.
- The approach to engage with Ward Councillors was working well and it would be helpful for Ward Councillors to have a named contact officer from Safer Kirklees.
- The robust partnership working between Safer Kirklees, the Fire Service, the Police and other Council Services, which included responses to resident concerns, reassurance visits, coordinated action during Bonfire Night, hotspot checks and effective communication through officers and the Police Intelligence Portal was acknowledged and commended.

- It was acknowledged that perception was an important issue in terms of hate crime; significant work took place in terms of awareness-raising of what a hate crime was, alongside building trust in the response and encouraging reporting.
- The improvements in police engagement over recent years were acknowledged and appreciated and the positive impact of both past and current local leadership.
- The importance of preventative road safety work was stressed and the increased budget for road safety work welcomed; it was hoped that this would encourage an area-based approach to investment.
- The RTC (Road Traffic Collision) prevention work was highlighted and the ongoing engagement with young drivers through education providers and police-led activities, noting that this would have long-term benefits and acknowledging the challenges in reaching more experienced drivers.

Outcomes

The Committee endorsed:

- The Community Safety Partnership ‘high focus priority areas’ and the 'continue to monitor work areas’ which would be shaped in the new Communities Partnership Plan with clear delivery plans.
- The identified cross-cutting themes for further examination and as areas to discuss with wider safeguarding partnerships.
- The approach to working with Councillors,

and noted that the revised Communities Partnership Plan, covering the period up to 2029, would be shared with the Committee for comment in due course.

Tourism Strategy

The Committee was updated in respect of the development of the Council’s Tourism Strategy in November 2025. Pre-decision scrutiny had taken place at an early stage of development in February. The feedback from the previous visit to the Committee had been incorporated into the draft strategy, alongside the results of the public consultation.

In respect of how the impact of the strategy would be measured; it was explained that the next step would be to use the strategy to produce deliverable action plans, co-produced with local communities with progress monitored against deliverable actions and supported by recognised evaluation tools.

Outcomes

The Committee welcomed the consideration given to the input of scrutiny in the development of the latest version of the strategy and supported the principles and objectives of the Tourism Strategy.

The Strategy was adopted by Cabinet on 13 January 2026 with the feedback and input provided by Scrutiny being set out in the report.

Physical Activity In North Kirklees

In November 2025, a report was presented in respect of proposals to develop a new sport and leisure facility in Dewsbury and to support wider improvement of physical activity levels in North Kirklees.

Outcomes

The Committee resolved:

- That the engagement with scrutiny and ward councillors at an early stage of the process be welcomed.
- That it be noted that an independent options appraisal and feasibility study for the provision of a new sport and leisure facility for Dewsbury are to be progressed and it be requested that regular updates be brought to the Committee, to include the work being proposed, alongside partners, to supplement existing provision to support people across North Kirklees to be more active.
- That it be recommended that a clear timeline be established, as a priority, to ensure that all interested parties are kept informed.
- That it be recommended that the Committee's feedback be considered in the commissioning process for the options appraisal.
- That the Committee's comments in relation to the potential outreach work be considered in the further development of these proposals.

Looking forward to 2026/27

- Council Financial Outturn and Rollover Report 2025/26
- Corporate Performance and Transformation priorities – quarterly reports
- Corporate Risk – quarterly reports
- Financial Management – quarterly reports
- Leader of the Council and Finance and Corporate Portfolio Holder Cabinet priorities for 2026/27
- Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) System Replacement – pre-decision scrutiny
- People Strategy update on Phase 3
- Cultural Strategy – pre-decision scrutiny
- Customer Experience Plan
- Physical Activity in North Kirklees Council
- WYCA updates
- Budget proposals

Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel

Panel Membership

Panel Membership
Councillor Jo Lawson [Chair]
Councillor Eric Firth
Councillor Alison Munro
Councillor Darren O’Donovan
Councillor Bill Armer
Councillor Habiban Zaman
Helen Clay [Co-Optee]
Kim Taylor [Co-Optee]

Work Programme

- Access to GPs.
- 0-19 Commissioning- Access to care. The Role of the Health Visitor.
- Patient Transport from Home to Hospital.
- Prevention of Suicide.
- Healthy System Financial Overview.
- Changes relating to NHS England, ICB and Healthwatch.
- Kirklees Safeguarding Adults Board Report.
- CQC.
- Quality of residential and domiciliary care.
- Winter pressures.
- CQC Kirklees Inspection outcome.
- Adults Social Care Risk Register.
- Mid Yorkshire Teaching NHS Trust strategy to NHS 10-year plan.

Panel Highlights

Access to GPs

The Panel included in its work programme a focus on services from GP practices across Kirklees, including the Pharmacy First Route.

Representatives from the Health and Care Partnership provided an overview of GP workforce data and access challenges across Kirklees highlighting the evolving roles of Physician Associates and Advanced Nurse Practitioners in general practice along with access methods for patients.

The Panel noted that Physician Associates were employed across both general practices and Primary Care Networks (PCNs), performing clinical duties under GP supervision. Advanced Nurse Practitioners were employed in over 20 practices and via PCNs. They were qualified to prescribe medication, manage undiagnosed conditions, and refer patients to secondary care.

It was noted that access methods for patients included telephone, in-person, and online consultations, with practices required to maintain online access during core hours from 1st October 2025. The Panel also noted the Pharmacy First initiative which enabled pharmacists to treat seven common conditions without GP involvement, thereby improving patient access and reducing pressure on general practice.

Outcomes

As a result of the discussion, the Panel requested further information on patients who were seen by non-GP roles (AP & NPA), statistics on people who used the pharmacy first route and further data on the 9 practices who had not accepted support to the new transition of GP practices working.

Quality of residential and domiciliary care

In the Panel's meeting on 22nd April 2026, officers from Adults Social Care provided an update on assurance of provider services, quality oversight and partnership working across the adult's social care market in Kirklees.

A presentation was provided that focused on system-wide quality assurance rather than individual providers and outlined how adult social care defined quality, identified when services were performing well and responded swiftly where concerns arose. Intelligence was drawn from multiple sources including CQC activity, commissioning and contract monitoring, safeguarding and frontline practitioner feedback.

The Panel acknowledged the increasing system pressures affecting safeguarding arrangements and the importance of continued multi-agency oversight.

Outcomes

The Panel recommended further scrutiny of adult's social care market sustainability and quality assurance along with further information on workforce vacancy trends over time.

Changes relating to the Integrated Care Board (ICB)

In the Panel's meetings held in February 2026, representatives from the West Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (ICB), Kirklees ICB and partner NHS Trusts provided an update on governance changes and establishment of Place Provider Partnerships (PPP).

It was highlighted that national NHS reforms required significant changes to the governance and operating model of ICBs. A shadow Place Provider Partnership would be established from April 2026 with full contractual delegation from West Yorkshire ICB to Place Provider Partnerships intended for April 2027. Kirklees was unique in having three acute providers across the footprint.

The Panel raised concerns around the lack of scrutiny regarding the Memorandum of Understanding and terms of reference around the PPPs and requested that the ICB return to a future meeting to provide a comprehensive explanation of the governance model, including decision-making arrangements, accountability, risk management and how the model would be subject to Overview and Scrutiny.

In the Panel's meeting held in March 2026, Representatives from the West Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (ICB), Kirklees ICB and partner NHS Trusts provided an update on Governance and Decision making, the shadow year arrangements, Involvement with partners, Memorandum of Understanding, Children's Services and Special Education Needs and Disabilities, Resourcing and staff, Dental commissioning, Fairness and Equality across place partnerships, Transparency and public meetings and contingency planning.

The Panel raised further concerns around the lack of scrutiny involvement and sought assurance that the right partners were part of the PPP's and decision making and requested the workplan for the Design Group and plan for organisational change.

Outcomes

The Panel requested that they received regular updates from WYICB, the Council's Executive Team and Portfolio Holders, and that they reserved the right to formally consider whether the proposed introduction of the PPP and Integrator Teams constituted a substantial variation in

service. The Panel also requested that WYICB and the Executive Tea incorporated learning into future engagement with scrutiny, ensuring key structural or operational change supporting documents were provided at the earliest opportunity.

Mid Yorkshire Teaching NHS Trust visit

As part of their continuing review into Maternity Care in Kirklees, Panel Members visited Mid Yorkshire Teaching NHS Trust 20th January 2026 to view the facilities offered to patients through their Accident and Emergency Department, Surgical Ward and Bronte Birth Centre.



Figure 1 - Members of the Panel and staff at the Bronte Birth Centre.

Looking forward to 2026/27

- Changes to the ICB
- Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME)
- Health System Financial Overview
- CQC
- Seasonal Pressures and Hospital Discharge
- Mid Yorkshire Teaching Trust Clinical Safety Review
- Kirklees Council CQC Inspection
- Principal Social Worker/Principal Occupational Therapist Annual Report
- Digital Exclusion and Access to Primary Care

- Martha's Law
- Patients experience at Hospitals
- Mental Health Referral Thresholds
- Unpaid Carers
- Safeguarding Adults Board
- Substance Misuse Services
- Visit to Huddersfield Diagnostic Centre
- Quality of Residential and Domiciliary Care
- Prevention of Suicide
- Dentistry
- Healthwatch Reforms

Comments

Kim Taylor – Scrutiny Co-optee

"This has been an interesting year with several areas of scrutiny. The panel has heard about the implications of the changes to the NHS West Yorkshire Integrated Care Board, the part that Kirklees Council will play in the development of the new Kirklees Provider Alliance and its aspirations for more joined up 'neighbourhood healthcare closer to people's homes.

The recent CQC inspection was discussed and the panel was informed of the work that is carried out to address the issues reported on, ensure continuing high-quality care and mitigate any risks to services.

A visit to the Bronte Birth Centre, MY surgical hub and the emergency department at Dewsbury District hospital was an opportunity to see examples of excellent healthcare in Kirklees and talk to clinicians working in these areas.

I look forward to hearing updates on all the above in the new municipal year.

Finally, I would like to thank all the outgoing councillors who have been so supportive of me as a voluntary co optee, and of course Nicola Sylvester who has provided a wealth of information and advice to enable me to fulfil my role.

I look forward to working with new panel members in the forthcoming months".

Helen Clay – Scrutiny Co-optee

"The scope and scale of the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel's remit is large and complex with each service and provision operating in challenging financial circumstances. As a voluntary co-optee it is a privilege to be able to speak directly to a range of attendees at meetings from senior decision makers to users of services to offer, on occasion, a fresh perspective, ask questions from a different angle and add value.

In the past year we have heard of issues ranging from large scale change in the ICB, the difference between Physician Associates and G.P.s role and its impact on patients, the role and responsibilities of a Health Visitor to the challenges facing people with M.E. to access appropriate services and a new service for LGBTQ+ people dealing with domestic violence.

In each of the above issues the panel contributed to the discussion and plans by noting the information provided by officers and where appropriate, robustly challenging it usually from the standpoint of the end user, employee or member of the public, or supporting to advance

developments e.g. enabling stronger contacts to raise awareness of the voices of people with M.E. to contribute to nursing/health care training.

The outcome of the Kirklees CQC inspection was disappointing for all involved and I appreciated that a range of officers attended the panel to set out the services response and action plan in detail.

The announcement of the closure of Health Watch in its current form, was a blow. The panel has utilised vital Health Watch intelligence sought directly from users or potential users of services to inform our discussions with officers on many occasions. They offered direct, trusted and accessible links with members of the public, most significantly in the ongoing issue of maternity services in Kirklees.

Members of the panel were invited to visit Dewsbury Hospital's new Surgical Hub, Accident and Emergency Dept. and maternity centre. The visit was extremely informative on the type and range of services provided and improvements made, with opportunities to speak to staff in each of the departments directly and later with senior management.

I have been a co-optee for four years and was pleased to be invited to join an induction session as part of the recruitment of new scrutiny panel co-optees. This offered me the opportunity to share my experience as a co-optee with the candidates and refresh on the basics of the role with them.

In my experience, the panel is committed to focus its limited time on the issues of highest priority for the people of Kirklees. It can be a difficult task to decide what not to include in the annual work plan as there can be so many competing priorities. However, if a significant issue arises during the year efforts are always made to address it, whether by extending a meeting, arranging a new meeting either in person or online or exchange information via email.

Growth and Regeneration Scrutiny Panel

Panel Membership

Panel Membership
Councillor Zarina Amin [Chair]
Councillor Donna Bellamy
Councillor Tim Bamford
Councillor Harry McCarthy
Councillor Yusra Hussain
Chris Friend [Co-Optee]
Jonathan Milner [Co-Optee]

Work Programme

- Kirklees Transport Strategy
- Our Cultural Heart Update on Progress
- Response to Awaab's Law
- Update of the Housing Management & Partnerships Service Redesign
- Transport Programme Annual Update
- Temporary accommodation/ B&B progress
- Homes &Neighbourhoods Governance Review
- Asset Disposal Programme
- Community Asset Transfers Update
- Tenant Voice Strategy Update
- Building Safety Compliance
- District Heating Update
- Mass Transit Spatial Development Framework item
- Regulatory Compliance Update
- Housing Growth Annual Update
- Update on National Planning Reforms

Panel Highlights

Our Cultural Heart Update on progress

On 11 August 2025, the Panel received a progress update on 'Our Cultural Heart' (OCH). Members were informed that OCH is a central component of the Huddersfield Blueprint and one of the Council's flagship regeneration programmes. Introduced in June 2019, the Blueprint sets out six priority areas for transformation across Huddersfield town centre, with Our Cultural Heart playing a pivotal role in delivering this ambition.

The Panel was advised that programme delivery is being overseen through a gateway review process, with key milestones reported to Cabinet for approval. This phased governance approach ensures strategic alignment, enables decisions to be taken at the appropriate stages, and provides flexibility to adapt the programme as it progresses.

Members were also informed of the extensive communication and engagement activity supporting the scheme. An ongoing communications campaign and a programme of events are in place to raise awareness, encourage public interest, and foster positive momentum around the development.

An illustrative masterplan was presented to the Panel, outlining the scope and phasing of the development. Phase one includes the delivery of the food hall, the new library, and the adjoining public square. Phase two focuses on the museum and gallery. Additional elements within the wider masterplan include the Queen Street plot, new public realm and park space, a venue, and a multi-storey car park.

Following the formal meeting, Panel members undertook a site visit, which provided the opportunity to view progress to date and gain a clearer understanding of how the vision for Our Cultural Heart is being realised.

Outcomes

It was agreed that the Panel would continue to receive regular progress updates and would have the opportunity to undertake further site visits at key stages of the programmes development.

Response to Awaab's Law

On 22 September 2025, the Panel received an update on the Council's preparations for the implementation of Awaab's Law. Panel members were advised that the update set out the Council's readiness for the new statutory requirements, which were due to come into force on 27 October 2025.

The Panel was informed that the law is named in memory of Awaab Ishak, who tragically died in 2020 following prolonged exposure to damp and mould in his home. Awaab's Law strengthens accountability for landlords by introducing statutory response times and placing a legal duty on them to carry out prompt and effective repairs where serious hazards, such as damp and mould, are identified.

Panel members were advised that Kirklees Homes and Neighbourhoods had already implemented robust practices and responsive demand management in relation to damp, mould and condensation. This followed a notice to improve issued by the Regulator of Social Housing and was established well in advance of the law's introduction. It was explained that the significant backlog and high volume of cases inherited when the landlord function returned in-house in 2022, had since been addressed. Case numbers were now stable and remain well below projected 'business as usual' levels.

The Panel was further informed that there was strong confidence in the service's ability to manage ongoing demand, including anticipated seasonal increases, while remaining fully compliant with the requirements of Awaab's Law. The approach in place was highly robust, with properties subject to survey, repair, and follow-up inspections at three and six-month intervals to ensure that issues have been fully resolved and do not reoccur.

Outcomes

The Panel acknowledged the Council's preparedness for the implementation of Awaab's Law and was satisfied that robust systems and processes were in place to manage damp, mould, and condensation cases effectively. The Panel noted the considerable progress made in addressing the historic backlog and welcomed the comprehensive approach to inspections and follow-up, including post-repair surveys to prevent reoccurrence. The Panel requested that ongoing compliance and performance data continue to be monitored and reported back to the Panel through routine updates.

Tenant Voice Strategy Update

On the 15 December 2025, the Panel received an update on the Tenant Voice Strategy. The Panel was informed that the report being presented would provide an update on progress in delivering the Tenant Voice Strategy, including the implementation of the refreshed engagement framework introduced in September 2025.

Panel members were informed that the update demonstrated how recent developments and improvements were strengthening compliance with the consumer standards, particularly the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard introduced under the Social Housing Regulation Act 2023.

It was explained that there had been significant changes to the way tenant engagement is undertaken, reflecting the increased importance placed on tenants' voices in shaping and improving housing services. It highlights a shift towards embedding engagement across all aspects of the service, ensuring that tenants' views, experiences, and needs are central to the planning, delivery, and continuous improvement of housing provision.

Outcomes

The Panel noted and welcomed the progress made in implementing the Tenant Voice Strategy and the refreshed engagement framework, recognising the strengthened focus on embedding tenant engagement across all areas of the housing service. The Panel was assured that the approach supported improved compliance with regulatory consumer standards, particularly in relation to transparency, influence, and accountability. The Panel requested that ongoing progress and evidence of tenant influence continue to be monitored and reported as part of future updates.

Temporary Accommodation/Bed and Breakfast

On 3 November 2025, the Panel received an update on the use of temporary accommodation and bed and breakfast, and the work being undertaken to address homelessness and improve temporary accommodation provision in Kirklees.

The Panel was informed that the presentation of homelessness often results in the Council having a statutory duty to provide accommodation. Homelessness presentations have risen significantly at a national level in recent years, driven by a range of factors including the cost-of-living crisis and a reduced availability of social housing stock. This has contributed to an acute national homelessness and temporary accommodation crisis, with approximately 130,000 households currently living in temporary accommodation, including an estimated 170,000 children.

The Panel heard of the impact that housing insecurity can have on families and individuals, including limited access to education, employment, health, support networks, and opportunities to thrive. Experiencing homelessness, particularly when individuals are placed in unsuitable bed and breakfast accommodation, can act as a barrier to rebuilding lives.

In response, Kirklees Council has maintained a strong focus on reducing reliance on bed and breakfast accommodation and prioritising more suitable alternatives, particularly for vulnerable households and families with children.

A number of key achievements were highlighted as follows:

- There has been a 20% reduction in the presentation of homelessness due to interventions upstream.
- There has been a reduction in the use of bed and breakfast in the same time frame due to additional provision of more appropriate accommodation of 20%
- By prioritising the most vulnerable, there has been a larger reduction in the number of families with children in bed and breakfast, a reduction of 58%.

The Panel was advised that the Council had taken a proactive approach to increasing the supply of more suitable temporary accommodation, with the aim of reducing the length of time households spend in bed and breakfast accommodation, which is recognised as the least appropriate form of provision.

While progress has been made, there are still more households in bed and breakfast accommodation than desired. The Council's ongoing ambition is to reach a position where no families with children are placed in bed and breakfast accommodation, except in exceptional circumstances. This objective will continue to be a key focus over the coming months and years, alongside the wider challenge of securing additional social housing and suitable private rented accommodation.

Outcomes

The Panel acknowledged the scale and complexity of the homelessness and temporary accommodation challenges, both locally and nationally, and welcomed the progress being made in reducing homelessness presentations and reliance on bed and breakfast accommodation, particularly for families with children. The Panel supported the continued focus on prevention, early intervention, and the provision of more suitable temporary accommodation. The Panel agreed that progress towards eliminating the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for families with children, other than in exceptional circumstances, should continue to be monitored and reported back to a future Panel meeting.

Looking forward to 2026/27

- Annual Complaints and Improvement Action Plan
- Renters Rights Act & Associated Policies
- Building Safety Policies
- Employment & Skills plan
- Rent and Service Charge Policy
- Council Tax Exemptions
- Our Cultural Heart Update
- Strategic Transport Programme Update
- Business Centres Strategy
- Regen project updates in Blueprint areas
- Asset Management Strategy (including options appraisals for midrise blocks)
- Ignition Works
- Housing Growth annual progress report
- Homelessness and temporary accommodation usage in Kirklees
- Local Plan update process
- Awaab's Law Phase 2
- Repairs Service Annual Performance Update
- Allocations and lettings performance
- RSH Regulatory Standards Compliance Statement
- Progress with Service Development Plan and Regulatory Compliance

Children’s Scrutiny Panel

Panel Membership

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

Work Programme

- Ofsted/Care Quality Commission (CQC) Local Area Partnership Inspection of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (ARPs) (June 2025) and post-inspection Action Plan (Big Plan 3)
- Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) statutory compliance, annual reviews, mediation, tribunals, complaints and quality assurance
- SEND Sufficiency Strategy 2025–28, including specialist school rebuilds, satellite provisions, ARPs and cluster working
- Oversight of performance data across Children's Social Care, Learning and Inclusion, Corporate Parenting and Youth Engagement
- Redesign of the Leaving Care Service and the development of Number 11 and Number 12 hubs
- Ofsted Inspecting Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) inspection (2024) improvement plan
- National reforms including the Schools White Paper and SEND White Paper: Every Child Achieving and Thriving
- Feedback from the Kirklees Parenting Board, including care-leaver-led sessions
- Annual report for Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE)

In addition to the formal meetings of the Panel, informal meetings took place to facilitate pre decision scrutiny such as the SEND Inspection report (draft action plan) and the SEND Transformation Plan, 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 are outlined later in this report. The Chair of the Panel also held Lead Member Briefings during 2025/26 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 and SEND.

Panel Highlights

Kirklees SEND Sufficiency for Kirklees 2025-2028

In August 2025, the Panel considered the Kirklees SEND Sufficiency for Kirklees 2025-2028.

Key findings:

- Needs analysis showed increases in speech & language needs, SEMH needs, and neurodiversity.
- Strategy focused on inclusive practice, post-16 pathways, reducing reliance on the independent sector, and expanding local provision.
- Major capital projects were underway, including the rebuild of Joseph Norton Academy and Woodley School & College specialist schools.
- Satellite provisions and ARPs were expanding, and cluster working was strengthening mainstream inclusion.

Outcomes

The Panel supported the Kirklees SEND Sufficiency for Kirklees 2025-28 and noted the actions undertaken to address some of the issues raised in the report. The Panel agreed that future reports would be shared with the Panel for consideration early in Spring 2026 on the SEND Sufficiency Strategy giving an update on progress and future plans, including an update on the work of the SEND Sufficiency Group.

Feedback from Kirklees Parenting Board

Across 2025/26, the Children's Scrutiny Panel received regular updates from the Kirklees Parenting Board, and noted that care leavers played an increasingly central role in shaping the Board's priorities. Key themes raised throughout the year included: -

- Improving employment, training and apprenticeship opportunities.
- Enhancing travel support and access to local services for care leavers, including those living outside Kirklees.
- Strengthening communication with children in care and care leavers.
- Expanding partnership offers**,** including leisure access and employer engagement.
- Ensuring reciprocal arrangements across regional boundaries.
- Increasing young people's direct involvement, including takeover meetings and contributions to training for Council staff.

Outcomes

The Panel agreed to receive copies of the Board minutes in future so that Panel Members could consider and understand the detail of the discussions held at meetings.

Update on the anticipated 'Schools White Paper' in relation to national reforms to the SEND system

In December 2025, the Panel considered a report and presentation regarding an update on the anticipated 'Schools White Paper' in relation to national reforms to the SEND system.

Key findings:

- A White Paper had been expected in Autumn 2025 but had been delayed and was expected in early 2026 after an extended period of co-creation with families, teachers and other experts.
- A letter to the Chair of the Education Select Committee, the Secretary of State for Education outlined the five principles on which SEND reform should be based.
- These five principles aligned with those in Kirklees; that support should be provided early, locally, fairly, effectively and delivered by partnerships through shared working.
- Early help was being enabled through the cluster working, new ARPs and additional specialist provision were in the process of being developed and built to enable children to attend school closer to home, and the recent Inspecting Local Authorities Children's Services (ILACS) inspection highlighted strength in partnership working.
- Plans were underway to provide opportunities for partners to discuss the White Paper which would allow partners to reflect on how it complemented strengths within the service offered in Kirklees and how it could underpin areas for improvement.
- The Children's Scrutiny Panel were invited to participate in these engagement sessions.

Outcomes

The Panel suggested that the engagement events could be signposted on the Local Offer site. The Panel were informed that the DfE webinars were publicised nationally. The Panel agreed to be invited to participate in future engagement sessions with Partners to discuss the White Paper.

EHCPs – Compliance, Mediation, Tribunals and Complaints and Compliments

The Panel considered a report and presentation on Education Health and Care Plans - Compliance, Mediation, Tribunals and Complaints and Compliments.

Key findings:

- Last year the number of EHCP needs assessments completed outside the 20 weeks statutory timescale was significant.
- There had been sustained month-on-month improvement to a current cumulative figure of 58% compliance, which was above previous years' national averages.
- At the end of 2022 the number of EHCPs maintained by the local authority was 4,125, at the end of 2023 there were 4,475 and latest figures indicated there would be in excess of 5,030 by the end of 2025.
- The EHCP team had worked hard to ensure that they were operating in line with the SEND Code of Practice and the Children and Families Act, to ensure that children's statutory rights were being met.
- Shared understanding of the sections in EHCPs had been promoted.
- The quality of plans was important, as well as compliance with timescales, and investment in an audit tool had been made to evaluate each section.
- Colleagues in the NHS and the DfE advisor were supporting work with practitioners where necessary to improve EHCP quality.
- At the end of October there were 35 live complaints, less than 1% of the 5,000+ EHCPs held by the Authority.
- Each complaint was important and the service strove to look into each case and provide timely responses.
- Learning from complaints was actively incorporated into improvements in practice, and compliments were received from the many families whose needs were being met across the education, health and care system.
- Wherever possible the Authority tried to find resolution of complaints, however where this was not possible mediation took place.

Outcomes

The Panel asked officers to explore whether data showing the percentage of children in Kirklees who had an EHCP could be provided to give a benchmark with other Local Authorities. The Panel were informed that the region was preparing an EHCP dataset as agreed by the Director of Children's Services (DCS) group for Yorkshire and Humber and when available this information would be shared with Scrutiny. The Panel also expressed confidence in the teams involved in this work and acknowledged the efforts of the service to improve and asked Officers to pass on their feedback to staff.

Kirklees Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) Annual Report 2024-2025

In February 2026, the Panel considered the 2024/25 Annual Report from the Kirklees Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) and noted that the Local Authority were compliant in meeting the statutory responsibilities with regard to SACRE, and were advised by Pennine Learning who worked alongside the service and SACRE. These responsibilities were -

- To monitor Religious Education (RE) provision across the local authority and produce the annual report which is shared with the Department for Education (DfE) and the National Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education.
- To monitor and support collective worship across the local authority.
- To ensure that where there have been family concerns, complaints, or requests to be removed from collective worship that they have had the opportunity to raise those with the advisory council.
- To produce an agreed syllabus for RE for community schools; this was the first year of that syllabus being in operation.
- To provide schools with high quality training and networking opportunities.

Outcome

The Panel explored how SACRE supported schools to deliver high-quality RE and how feedback from pupils was being used to shape future work.

‘The Big Plan’ – Preparation for Adulthood (PFA)

The Panel considered a report on ‘The Big Plan’ – Preparation for Adulthood (PfA) which outlined what Preparation for Adulthood was, as set out in the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Code of Practice (2015) and provided an overview of the work that the Local Area Partnership was undertaking to improve, as part of the SEND transformation.

Key findings:

- Preparation for Adulthood (PfA) meant being healthy, having care needs met, educational opportunities, entering the world of work or volunteering, being part of society, and enjoying leisure and social activities.
- As a partnership there were statutory responsibilities to remove barriers to achieving this preparation.
- Transition from childhood to adulthood involved different health and social care services, and possible changes in educational or work setting.
- Suggestions from parents and the Parent Carer Forum had included additional learning opportunities for young people, help with their housing needs and information on their rights regarding finances and benefits.
- A ‘Preparing for the Future’ event had been held with council services and partners, and output from the event had fed into the refreshed PfA workstream under the SEND Transformation Plan.
- Feedback from young people had informed the plan, specifically with regard to providing for those young people who had been in receipt of some SEND support but had not received an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).
- ILACS identified PfA as an area for further improvement.
- ‘Big Plan 3’ incorporated focused activity around PfA over the next 12 months, including a board refresh and the convening of a working group involving partners including parents.

- Areas for action included establishing and publishing a clear pathway, from Year 9, putting in place collaborative transition teams (transition huddles). Gap analysis and a commissioning review was recommended, and it was suggested that good practice be built upon with supported internships.
- More support from the Yorkshire and Humber Regional Improvement Alliance RISE partnership would be available in March, with co-production workshops, training for social workers, and the gathering of young people's voice.

Outcome

It was agreed that the final report on Preparation for Adulthood would be shared with the Panel.

Multi-agency developments around the Children's Social Care Reforms

In February 2026, the Panel considered a report on Multi-agency developments around the Children's Social Care Reforms.

Key findings:

- The Department for Education had asked children's social care departments to get engaged in one of the biggest reforms of children's social care in a generation.
- The government's aim was for every child to be given the best chances in life, by focusing on earlier intervention in children's lives, and preventing children getting to the stage where they could no longer live with their families.
- The three main areas for change were: family help, support to children on child protection plans, and involving families more effectively through family group decision-making meetings.
- The ultimate aim was for children and families to be supported to stay together and get the help they need.
- The Children's Well-being and Schools Bill required families to be offered a family-led decision-making meeting before care proceedings were issued.
- A working group had been set up to ensure that the renewed one assessment plan was easily understood by families, using clear language.
- Quarterly updates were being sent to the DfE on progress made and a quarterly newsletter was being sent to partners.
- Engagement events had been held with staff, and the Our Voice Team had been working with high school children.
- Reforms should be implemented by April 2027, with a plan completed by the end of the financial year, although the Children's Well-being and Schools Bill was going through Parliament more slowly than had been expected.
- Next steps included talking to HR partners and the unions to ensure that staff were well briefed on any changes, and engaging with staff and partners to ensure that the reforms were right for children and families in Kirklees, and would make a positive difference.

Outcome

The Panel explored how reforms would impact frontline practice and how families would be supported through changes.

Progress of the Ofsted Improvement Plan

In March 2026, the Panel considered a report on the progress of the Ofsted Improvement Plan which provided an update on the progress made within Children's Social Care since the Ofsted inspection in 2024. The inspection had identified significant improvement, judged Children's Services in Kirklees as being 'good' and acknowledged that leaders had clear action plans in place to address challenges.

Areas of improvement identified by Ofsted during the inspection were -

1. The effectiveness of practice with every child who was experiencing harm from neglect and / or domestic abuse.
2. The quality of written plans, records and meeting minutes for the minority of children in care and care leavers where these documents were weak.
3. The availability and choice of homes for children in care and care leavers.

Key findings:

- A rigorous improvement plan, overseen by elected members and the Executive Leadership Team, was ensuring that services enhanced opportunities and experiences for families in Kirklees
- Improvement activities related to neglect and domestic abuse had been supported by the Kirklees Safeguarding Partnership.
- Self-evaluation was updated annually and incorporated feedback from practice audits, thematic focus deep dives, and practice learning days.
- Self-evaluation activity had highlighted progress made against a range of areas of practice and identified what further actions were needed.
- Positive progress had been made in all areas identified in the inspection.

Outcome

The Panel thanked officers for their efforts in improving the service, which the Panel had seen evidence of in their visits throughout the year, especially with regard to accommodation, education and employment. The Panel congratulated all staff involved in the Social Care Conference, and in the work undertaken to put children at the centre of their written records.

The Re-design of the Leaving Care Service

In March 2026, the Panel considered a report on the Re-design of the Leaving Care Service.

Key findings:

- The report set out the journey of the improvements made since November 2023, when the national government adviser on care leaver services, Mark Bradell, visited Kirklees to provide a benchmark of services in comparison with other services nationally.
- The Kirklees Parenting Board had been redesigned from the previous Corporate Parenting Board, and had set out six priorities. One of the priorities was to develop a care leaving partnership to support care leavers going forward.
- Ambassador events had been held with partners including Kirklees College, Huddersfield University, small charities and community services, to help design the priorities, the structure and the board arrangements.
- Two hubs, Number 11 in Huddersfield and Number 12 in Dewsbury, offered a welcoming environment for care leavers with kitchen, shower and laundry facilities. Partners used the hubs as a marketplace to offer their services.

- A service review was carried out to build on the improvement. Additional funding was applied for to engage with care leavers, and the number of 21 to 25 year olds who engaged with the service had increased. This allowed care leavers to make better use of the wider partnership and achieve success in education and accommodation, the two main challenges for care experienced adults.
- Caseloads were significant, but would be reduced by the appointment of new staff.
- Scrutiny Panel Members had recently visited Number 11 and seen how the hub hosted specialist services.

Outcome

The Panel agreed that following their visit to Number 11 they had found it to be a safe space for care leavers, where engagement with other partners could start on a positive footing and noted the optimism within the team about the additional funding and extra capacity, that would enable the fulfilment of the plans. The Panel also visited the Leaving Care Service on the 11th March

Update on the SEND White Paper: Every child achieving and thriving

In March 2026, the Panel considered a verbal update on the SEND White Paper: Every Child Achieving and Thriving.

Key findings:

- The comprehensive SEND White Paper had been published after delays, and formed part of the wider schools White Paper.
- Events had been organised locally to consult with a range of professionals, parents and partners about the proposed reforms, and this SEND White Paper consultation closed in mid-May 2026.
- The government had tasked Directors of Children's Services with writing a reform plan, to be signed off by mid-June 2026.
- National consultation had taken place with parents about the approach, which moved towards supporting mainstream inclusion for young people within their local areas and communities.
- The White Paper suggested three levels of support: targeted support, targeted plus within a unit in mainstream schools, and support in special schools where children had a complex Education, Health and Social Care Plan (EHCP).
- Every secondary school would be expected to have a unit/additionally resourced provision (ARP).
- The White Paper acknowledged that schools would need extra support to undertake this approach and the government proposed a 1.8 million fund called "Experts at Hand".
- There could be challenges around the workforce due to pressures across the board and there were changes within the Integrated Care Board (ICB).
- The local authority would be the 'convenor' for the system and would hold responsibility for the co-ordination of the changes.

Outcome

The Panel agreed that the SEND Reforms Plan would be considered again when a written reform plan with partners had been produced which would be in place by June 2026. The Panel agreed to attend the SEND Reforms Event on the 25th March 2026 and report back on their findings to the Panel.

Partnership arrangements and visits by the Panel

The Panel visited both internal teams and external partners and voluntary groups during the 2025/26 municipal year. The following visits took place –

- EHCP Decision to Assess Panel on 22 May 2025
- Places, Access and Inclusion Committee on 10 June 2025
- EHCP Decision to Issue Panel – 19th June 2025
- Cluster Schools Visit to Holmfirth High School – 25th June 2025 and Birkby Junior School on 26th June 2025
- SEND Transformation Programme Focus Session - 27th June 2025
- Special Guardianship Order Support Group – 2nd July 2025
- EHCP Specialist Placement Panel - 4th July 2025
- Education Learning Partnership Board – 16th July 2025
- Centre for Governance & Scrutiny – SEND Scrutiny Event on 28th August 2025
- Elective Home Education Team Visit - 9th September 2025
- Home-Start AGM – 25th September 2025
- Local Offer Live Event (PCAN) – 23rd October 2025
- Families First Partnership Programme Session – 3rd February 2026
- Preparation for Adulthood (PfA) Board – 24th February 2026
- PCAN Support Group – 25th February 2026
- ARP Satellite Provision Visit to Woodley Moor – 27th February 2026
- Leaving Care Service Visit at No 11 on 11th March 2026
- Children's Social Care Conference – 17th March 2026
- SEND Reforms Engagement Event – 25th March 2026

Visit to the Elective Home Education Team (EHE) on the 9th September 2025

The Panel Members met with the Elective Home Education (EHE) Team to discuss statutory duties covering EHE, Children Missing in Education, attendance and legal intervention. The team faced workload pressures and relied on manual data processes; transformation work aimed to improve tracking and streamline systems.



Figure 2 - Visit to meet with the Elective Home Education Team on 9th September 2025

Most EHE referrals come from schools, though parents are not required to notify the council that they have decided to home educate their child. The team worked closely with admissions, health, Locala and safeguarding partners to identify children and ensure appropriate support was put in place. Around 1% of Kirklees children were home educated, with varied reasons and different circumstances.

The team emphasised early conversations with schools, positive relationships with families, and supporting a return to mainstream school where EHE was not sustainable. Challenges included evolving statutory guidance, compliance requirements and increasing complexity of duties. Good practice included early college access for Year 11 pupils, careers support, and proactive sharing of information with families.



Figure 3 - Meeting with Team Managers from the Elective Home Education Team on 9th September 2025

Visit to Special Guardianship Support Group on 2nd July 2025



Figure 4 - Visit to Special Guardianship Support Group on 2nd July 2025

The Panel visited the SGO Support Group on the 2nd July 2026 attended by Family Support Workers and carers and heard first-hand experiences of raising children with complex needs. Carers described significant challenges accessing SEND support, frequent changes in EHCP caseworkers, and delays in reviews.

Carers reported feeling dissatisfied with services, unclear entitlement to disability support, and inconsistent communication from schools and the local authority. Many highlighted the impact of trauma on children and the emotional strain of managing behaviours, contact sessions with birth parents, and repeated court proceedings. Several carers expressed fear of seeking help due to past negative experiences.

Staff acknowledged gaps in support, particularly around counselling for children under 16, and committed to raising issues with relevant teams and partners. The group provided peer support, activities and advocacy, but carers emphasised the need for more consistent, timely and child-centred SEND and safeguarding responses.

Some quotes from carers were –

“When a child is taken away from its birth parents it is traumatic, we are dealing with major diversities in children, we know they’ve got trauma, but when we’ve looked after them long enough we can identify what the problems are and how we can help them”

“My child has a Trusted Person at school to help him, but when that person is off it does trigger his behaviour.”

“My son stopped going to school yesterday, but he really does need to be in school so he can be nurtured.”

Visit to Woodley Moor on 27th February 2026

The Panel visited one of the satellite provision sites at Woodley Moor Children's Centre which had been put in place for youngsters whilst the two new special schools were built to provide additionally resourced provision. Panel Members said that classrooms at the Centre were homely and thematic, for example underwater themes and some rooms had sand pits and soft corners to help children to self-regulate. Children were taught life skills at the school, such as eating with cutlery, cooking and cleaning

Visit to Special Guardianship Support Group on 2nd July 2025

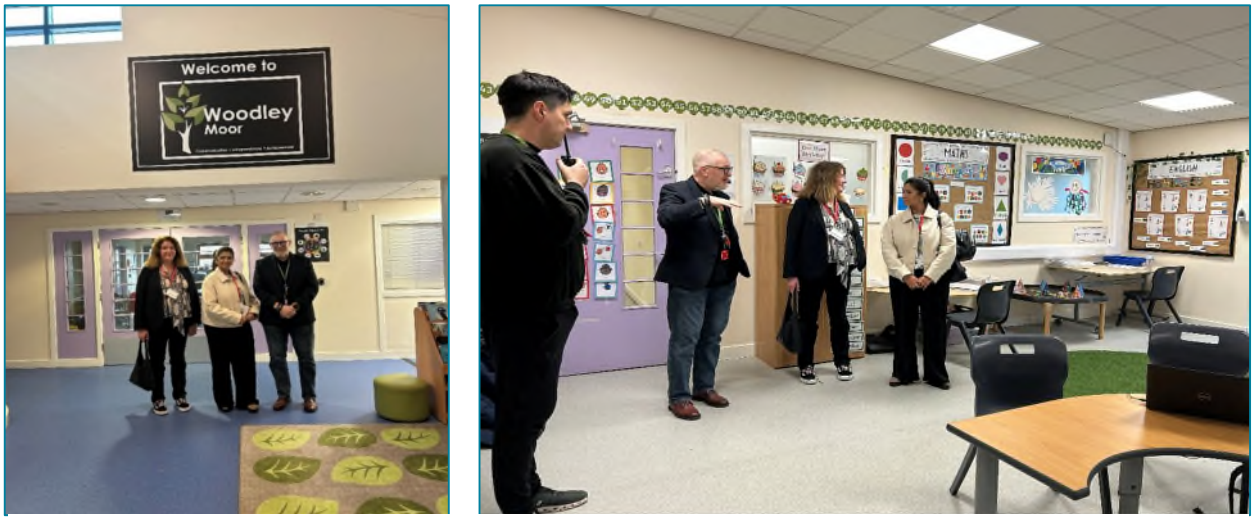


Figure 5 - Visit to Special Guardianship Support Group on 2nd July 2025

Visit to Parents of Children with an Additional Need (PCAN) Support Group on 25th February 2026

The Panel met with support workers and parents at the PCAN Support Group and were shown round the sensory area which had been set up for children with special needs. They observed how parents could bring their children to the centre to have a coffee and chat with other carers, whilst their children could enjoy the sensory area.



Figure 6 - Sensory Area at the Parent Carer Advocacy Network (PCAN) Support Group.

Looking forward to 2026/27

- SEND Reforms
- School Attendance
- Standing Advisory Committee Religious Education (SACRE)
- Sufficiency of Children's Homes and the approach to create stable and loving homes for children in Kirklees Council
- Children's Voice
- Family Hubs
- Care Leavers Service
- Youth Justice Service and Youth Engagement Service
- Children's Social Care Reforms
- Children in sexual exploitation
- Youth Club Movement Work Offer and Children in Sports
- Impact of the ICB changes on health provision for children, in particular Mental Health Provision

Comments

Tom Brailsford, Director of Children and Families

I'd like to thank the Chair and the Panel for their hard work during 2025/26 in supporting the Children, Young People and Families Directorate. We always welcome the scrutiny programme and value it as an important part of our commitment to continuous improvement. Throughout the year, the Panel provided a strong balance of challenge, curiosity and support in relation to children's services. We also welcomed members on a number of service visits, where they observed key aspects of our operational work. These visits were rewarding for staff, and I hope they were equally valuable for Panel members.

Jo-Anne Sanders, Service Director for Learning and Inclusion

I have appreciated the thoughtful questions and the feedback that the Panel gave us in the last municipal year. I feel that the panel really sought to deepen their understanding of the work undertaken across Learning and Inclusion services by undertaking visits, and offering appropriate challenge and support.

Environment and Climate Change Panel

Panel Membership

Panel Membership
Councillor Andrew Cooper [Chair]
Councillor Musarrat Khan
Councillor David Longstaff
Councillor Matthew McLoughlin
Councillor Will Simpson
Councillor John Taylor
Kevin Evans [Co-Optee]

Work Programme

During the 2025/26 municipal year the Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Panel considered the following issues:

- Simpler Recycling and Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Update
- Snow Warden Scheme Update 2025/26
- Solutions to Fly-tipping
- LitterPact and the Love Where You Live Programme Update
- Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) Fund for Public Electric Vehicle Charging Points in Kirklees
- Playable Spaces Update
- Annual Review of Flood Risk Management Activities
- White Rose Forest Delivery and Kirklees Woodland Creation Update
- Moving Traffic Enforcement Update

Committee Highlights

Key areas of focus (‘golden threads’)

Throughout its scrutiny work, the Panel focused on Climate Impact, Risks and Opportunities, Partnership Working and Communications as the key areas of consideration ("golden threads") underpinning its scrutiny activity.

Across all items considered, the Panel examined how services contributed to the Council's environmental and climate ambitions, identified emerging risks and opportunities for the Council and communities, and explored the effectiveness of partnership working with organisations including community groups, the third sector and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority. The Panel also placed a strong emphasis on communications and engagement, considering how the Council was using information campaigns, consultation, behavioural change initiatives and targeted engagement to raise awareness of key issues, support residents through changes, encourage community participation and promote positive outcomes.

Simpler Recycling

At the meeting held on 13 August 2025, the Panel considered a report and presentation on the introduction of Simpler Recycling and the implications of the national Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) legislation. The item focused on the significant changes required to waste and recycling services, future procurement arrangements, resident engagement, and the transition to new collection and disposal arrangements by 2028.

Key Findings:

Scale of Change

The Panel noted the changes as a once-in-a-generation opportunity to transform waste management services in Kirklees. It was noted that all local authorities were undergoing similar transitions as a result of national reforms, creating opportunities for shared learning and collaboration whilst emphasising the importance of infrastructure investment and resident engagement throughout implementation.

Implementation:

The Panel noted that Simpler Recycling would require the separation of waste streams and introduce significant changes to household recycling arrangements. Members recognised the scale of the changes and the importance of aligning implementation with the expiry of the Council's current waste contract in 2028.

Financial Sustainability and Funding Uncertainty:

The Panel scrutinised the financial implications of the new arrangements, including the anticipated £6.6 million Extended Producer Responsibility payment. Questions were raised regarding the long-term sustainability of funding, the future impact of the changes, and the cost associated with food waste collection services.

Resident Engagement and Behaviour Change:

Members highlighted the importance of a comprehensive communications and mobilisation programme to support residents through the transition. The Panel welcomed plans for a two-year engagement campaign and explored how lessons from other authorities could be used to maximise participation and minimise disruption.

Inclusive and Accessible Service Design:

The Panel sought assurances that future recycling arrangements would be accessible to all residents, including those with dementia and vulnerable groups. Members advocated for inclusive design measures and suggested clear internal bin-lid labelling to support residents in correctly separating waste.

Engagement with Vulnerable Communities:

The Panel emphasised the importance of partnership working with the third sector and adult social care services to ensure that hard-to-reach and vulnerable residents were fully supported throughout the transition to the new arrangements.

School and Community Alignment:

Members explored how recycling practices within schools could be aligned with household arrangements to reinforce public understanding and support long-term behavioural change. Officers confirmed that engagement with schools would continue throughout implementation planning.

Waste Infrastructure and Future Procurement:

The Panel examined the challenges associated with the transition of waste treatment infrastructure, the future of the Materials Recovery Facility, and procurement arrangements following the expiry of the current contract. Members highlighted the importance of securing resilient, sustainable, and environmentally beneficial arrangements for the future.

Outcomes

Following scrutiny of the proposals, the Panel recommended that engagement with the third sector and adult social care services be undertaken to support vulnerable groups and ensure inclusive engagement throughout the transition process.

The Panel further recommended that inclusive design measures, including clear bin-lid labelling, be incorporated into future service planning to support residents with dementia. Finally, Members

recommended that engagement with schools be maintained to ensure consistency between school and household recycling practices.

The scrutiny exercise provided early challenge and assurance and highlighted the importance of resident engagement, accessibility, and long-term financial sustainability as key considerations moving forward. A further update will be provided to the Panel in 2026/27 as part of the Panel's ongoing scrutiny of Recycling and Waste Management in Kirklees.

Snow Warden Scheme Update

At the meeting held on 8 October 2025, the Panel considered an update on the Council's Snow Warden Scheme ahead of the 2025/26 winter season. The report reviewed the performance of the scheme, volunteer feedback and lessons learned from previous winters, together with proposals to strengthen the scheme for the year ahead.

Key Findings

Growth and Community Resilience

The Panel welcomed the continued growth of the scheme since its introduction in 2021 and recognised the contribution made by volunteers in supporting local communities during severe winter weather. Members also welcomed the increased interest in the scheme and the continued development of community-led winter resilience.

Volunteer Support and Operational Improvements

The Panel considered feedback from volunteers regarding equipment, grit supplies and distribution arrangements. Members welcomed proposals to improve equipment quality, increase grit availability and introduce a more flexible delivery and collection model to address issues experienced during previous winters.

Service Coverage and Promotion

The Panel explored opportunities to improve coverage in areas without access to grit bins or network gritting, particularly within newer housing developments. Members also welcomed ongoing promotional activity and noted the successful implementation of a previous scrutiny recommendation allowing volunteers to join the scheme mid-season.

Outcomes

The Panel recommended that additional guidance be provided to volunteers on the correct use of equipment and that further consideration be given to prioritising Snow Wardens in areas with limited winter service coverage. Members also requested a response regarding support for residents living within new housing developments and recommended that further work be undertaken to promote the scheme and capture evidence demonstrating its impact.

A further update will be provided during 2026/27 as part of the Panel's ongoing scrutiny of winter maintenance and preparedness in Kirklees.

Solutions to Fly-tipping

At the meeting held on 26 November 2025, the Panel considered an update on fly-tipping across Kirklees and the development of a new Fly-tipping and Litter Strategy. The discussion focused on enforcement activity, behaviour change, environmental impacts and opportunities to reduce fly-tipping through partnership working and evidence-led interventions.

Key Findings:

Scale of the Challenge and Service Performance

The Panel noted that fly-tipping remained a significant environmental challenge both locally and nationally. Members welcomed the substantial reduction in the service backlog and improvements in response times, recognising the work undertaken by officers to improve operational performance.

Prevention, Behaviour Change and Communications

The Panel highlighted the importance of preventing fly-tipping through education, engagement and behaviour change. Members explored the role of communications, accessibility to disposal services and partnership working in encouraging responsible waste disposal.

Enforcement and Evidence-Based Approaches

The Panel considered enforcement activity, sentencing arrangements and the importance of robust data in understanding trends, measuring success and informing future interventions. Members also highlighted the importance of working with communities, landlords and student populations to address root causes.

Outcomes

The Panel supported the development of the Fly-tipping and Litter Strategy and recommended that engagement with scrutiny continue throughout its development prior to Cabinet consideration with an update now scheduled within the 2026/27 work programme.

Members also recommended enhanced promotion of discounted bulky waste collection services, requested additional performance data and supported raising concerns regarding sentencing through the Local Government Association.

LitterPact and the Love Where you Live Programme

At the meeting held on 26 November 2025, the Panel welcomed representatives from Keeping Britian Tidy who provided a presentation on the LitterPact and Love Where You Live Programme. The Panel examined the findings from the Heckmondwike pilot project, which sought to reduce litter, improve public perceptions of local areas, and develop a model that could be replicated elsewhere.

Key Findings:

Evidence-Based Behaviour Change:

The Panel noted that the project had utilised a range of behaviour change interventions, supported by extensive monitoring and data collection, to better understand littering behaviours and identify the most effective solutions.

Positive Environmental Outcomes

Members welcomed evidence demonstrating measurable reductions in litter through targeted interventions, including significant reductions associated with campaigns such as "Bin It for Good" and "Still Littering". The Panel recognised the value of evidence-led approaches in delivering environmental improvements.

Community and Business Engagement:

The Panel heard how community groups, businesses and schools had been engaged throughout the project. Members welcomed the success of the Adopt an Area scheme and recognised the importance of local ownership in creating cleaner and more attractive communities. Members also explored the relationship between litter reduction and wider perceptions of place. The Panel noted that strengthening pride in local communities was a key component of creating lasting behavioural change and improving environmental outcomes.

Learning for Future Strategy Development:

The Panel recognised the value of the project in providing evidence and learning that could inform the development of Kirklees' wider fly-tipping and litter strategy, particularly in relation to data collection, behavioural insights and community engagement approaches.

National Influence and Best Practice:

The Panel welcomed the ambition to develop a best-practice blueprint capable of being shared nationally and explored opportunities for partnership working with the Local Government Association to amplify the lessons learned from the project.

Outcomes

The Panel welcomed the positive results emerging from the pilot project and extended thanks to representatives from Keep Britain Tidy for their impactful work and attendance at scrutiny.

The Panel were interested to understand the final outcomes of the Love Where You Live Heckmondwike project and requested that this information be shared with the Panel upon completion to support future learning and scrutiny.

The Panel also supported further engagement with the Local Government Association's Neighbourhoods Policy Committee to explore opportunities to promote successful approaches nationally and maximise the impact of behavioural change initiatives.

Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) Fund for Public Electric Vehicle Charging Points

At the meeting held on 7 January 2026, the Panel considered an update on the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) Fund and proposals to expand the public electric vehicle charging network across Kirklees. The update focused on infrastructure delivery, funding opportunities and supporting the transition to lower-emission transport.

Key Findings

Supporting the Transition to Electric Vehicles

The Panel noted increasing demand for public charging infrastructure and welcomed the opportunities provided through LEVI funding to improve charging provision across the district and support the Council's wider environmental ambitions.

Infrastructure Planning and Delivery

Members examined the methodology used to identify charging locations and sought assurance that future phases would support equitable access across communities. The Panel welcomed the use of data-led decision making and long-term planning to guide investment.

Future Sustainability and Innovation

The Panel scrutinised maintenance arrangements, future technological developments and charging costs. Members welcomed assurances around performance standards, contract management and the ability to adapt infrastructure as technology and demand evolved.

Outcomes

The Panel welcomed the progress made in securing investment and requested that information relating to site-selection methodology and contractual arrangements be shared to support ongoing scrutiny of delivery, maintenance and performance.

Playable Spaces Update

At the meeting held on 7 January 2026, the Panel considered an update on the Playable Spaces Programme, reviewing progress since the adoption of the strategy and examining opportunities to strengthen future delivery. Members scrutinised programme performance, funding challenges, maintenance requirements and future strategic direction.

Key Findings:

Progress Against Programme Objectives:

The Panel welcomed progress made through the programme and noted that significant investment had already been delivered to improve play value across a number of sites. Members recognised both the achievements of the programme and the scale of the remaining work.

Financial Sustainability:

Members examined the impact of rising construction and maintenance costs and acknowledged the challenges these presented to long-term delivery. The Panel emphasised the importance of ensuring future aspirations remained aligned with available resources and sustainable funding arrangements.

Development Opportunities:

The Panel explored opportunities to maximise the use of planning policy and Section 106 agreements to secure improved outcomes for play provision and highlighted opportunities in embedding play requirements within future planning processes and associated guidance.

Managing Expectations and Community Engagement:

The Panel discussed the challenges associated with delivering improvements at pace while maintaining meaningful engagement with communities. Members highlighted the need for realistic expectations and clear communication regarding available resources and future delivery timescales.

Environmental Sustainability:

The Panel welcomed efforts to incorporate environmentally sustainable approaches, including the reuse and refurbishment of equipment, biodiversity considerations and the exploration of more environmentally friendly surfaces.

Measuring Success and Demand:

Members explored how play value was assessed and identified opportunities to strengthen future evidence gathering through visitor data and usage information recognising the importance of robust data in supporting future investment decisions.

Outcomes

The Panel recommended that further work be undertaken to explore how supplementary planning guidance could be utilised to secure better outcomes for playable spaces through the planning process. Members also recommended that future programme aspirations continue to be aligned with available resources and that any potential funding gaps be identified at an early stage.

The Panel also requested that details of the technical assessment methodology used to assess play value be shared with Members and recommended that opportunities be explored to capture visitor data at play sites to inform future investment decisions and strategic planning.

Annual Review of Flood Risk Management Activities

At the meeting held on 11 February 2026, the Panel considered the Annual Review of Flood Risk Management Activities. The update focused on flood risk avoidance, asset management, natural flood management, community resilience and the growing integration of flood risk management with wider climate adaptation and planning activity. The Panel also received an update on mental health support for communities affected by flooding and the development of evidence-based interventions.

Key Findings:

Integrated Flood Risk Management:

The Panel noted the move towards a more integrated approach to flood management and welcomed the links being established between flood risk planning, asset management and the Local Plan. Members also recognised the importance of coordinated action across agencies and services to improve resilience across the district.

Trash Screen Management and Infrastructure Improvements:

The Panel scrutinised the Council's approach to the maintenance and management of trash screens and noted proposals to improve monitoring arrangements, redesign infrastructure and secure external funding for upgrades. Members recognised the importance of balancing flood risk, budget pressures and operational priorities when managing assets.

Natural Flood Management:

Members welcomed progress in developing Natural Flood Management schemes across Kirklees. The Panel noted the continued use of interventions including tree planting, attenuation basins, hedgerows and leaky dams, recognising the wider benefits these approaches delivered for biodiversity, climate resilience and flood mitigation.

Community Resilience and Mental Health Support:

The Panel welcomed the continuation of work examining the mental health impacts of flooding on residents. Members noted evidence demonstrating the long-term emotional and psychological impacts experienced by flood-affected communities and commended efforts to strengthen resilience through targeted support and Mental Health First Aid training.

Partnership Working and Research:

The Panel recognised the value of partnership working with the University of Huddersfield and other organisations to improve shared understanding of the relationship between flooding, wellbeing and community resilience. Members welcomed the use of research, surveys and interviews to establish a strong evidence base for future interventions.

Long-Term Flood Resilience:

The Panel explored the management of flood mitigation infrastructure within new developments and received assurances regarding the use of Section 106 agreements and management arrangements to reduce future risks for residents. Members also discussed the evolving nature of national flood funding and the importance of securing investment for preventative measures.

Outcomes

The Panel welcomed the continued focus on identifying opportunities for flood mitigation through both traditional risk-based methodology and nature-based approaches. Members expressed support for the Council's work to strengthen community resilience, improve flood infrastructure and develop a greater understanding of the mental health impacts of flooding. A further update is planned for 2026/27 as part of the Panel's ongoing consideration of flood risk management in Kirklees.

White Rose Forest Delivery and Woodland Creation Update

At the meeting held on 11 February 2026, the Panel considered updates on the White Rose Forest Programme and the Kirklees Woodland Creation Programme. The reports outlined progress in woodland creation, biodiversity enhancement, climate resilience and community engagement activities across the district.

Key Findings

Woodland Creation and Environmental Benefits

The Panel welcomed the continued success of woodland creation activity and recognised its contribution towards carbon reduction, biodiversity enhancement, flood mitigation and community wellbeing.

Long-Term Sustainability and Maintenance

Members examined future funding challenges, woodland maintenance arrangements and the importance of securing sustainable long-term management of woodland assets. The Panel welcomed efforts to diversify funding streams and strengthen aftercare arrangements.

Community Engagement and Future Opportunities

The Panel recognised the important role played by volunteers, schools and local communities in supporting woodland creation. Members also explored opportunities to strengthen woodland creation through planning policy and future development activity.

Outcomes

The Panel welcomed the progress achieved through both programmes and recognised the positive contribution woodland creation continues to make towards Kirklees' climate and environmental ambitions. Members further recommended that discussions continue regarding the use of Section 106 agreements to support woodland creation opportunities wherever possible and a further update is planned to be presented to the Panel during 2026/27.

Moving Traffic Enforcement

At the meeting held on 17 March 2026, the Panel considered an update on the introduction of Moving Traffic Enforcement (MTE) powers within Kirklees. The report outlined proposals to use Automatic Number Plate Recognition technology to improve compliance with traffic restrictions, enhance road safety and support the Council's Vision Zero ambitions.

Key Findings

Road Safety and Enforcement

The Panel welcomed the proposed trial and recognised the role that Moving Traffic Enforcement could play in improving compliance with traffic regulations and reducing road safety risks across the highway network.

Evidence-Based Delivery

Members scrutinised the process used to identify trial locations and welcomed the use of consultation, traffic data and evidence gathering to target enforcement where it could have the greatest impact.

Monitoring, Technology and Future Development

The Panel considered the longer-term sustainability of the scheme, the opportunities presented by ANPR technology and the potential for future expansion if the trial proved successful. Members also emphasised the importance of monitoring traffic displacement and behavioural change following implementation.

Outcomes

The Panel supported the proposed trial and welcomed its focus on improving road safety and supporting Vision Zero objectives. Members recommended that data be collected on changes in vehicle movements and traffic patterns following implementation to assess the effectiveness of the scheme and inform future decision making.

Looking forward to 2026/27

- Waste and Recycling Service Overview
- The Draft Air Quality Action Plan
- Simpler Recycling
- Winter Maintenance
- Highway Maintenance
- Fly-Tipping and Cleansing
- White Rose Forest Update
- Annual Update on Flood Risk

- Updates on Environmental Matters, Climate Change and Net Zero Targets
- Highways Network Management and Highway Asset Management and Lane Rental

West Yorkshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Committee Membership

During the year, Councillor Elizabeth Smaje served as Chair of the Committee, with Councillor Colin Hutchinson serving as Deputy-Chair. Membership of the Committee also included Councillor Jo Lawson along with Councillors Jonathan Timbers representing Calderdale Council, Rizwana Jamil and Alun Griffiths representing Bradford Council, Andrew Scopes and Sandy Lay representing Leeds City Council, Betty Rhodes and Andy Nicholls representing Wakefield Council, and Andy Solloway and Andrew Lee representing North Yorkshire Council.

Committee Highlights

The West Yorkshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JHOSC) met during 2025/26 to scrutinise a range of health services and continued to provide oversight of the work of the West Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (ICB), regional provider collaboratives and system-wide transformation programmes.

During July 2025, the Committee considered the West Yorkshire ICB's 2025/26 Operational Plan, scrutinising financial sustainability, workforce planning, service performance and system priorities. Members examined plans to achieve a balanced financial position, elective recovery targets, workforce developments and the delivery of improvements across a range of services. Particular attention was given to the reduction of mental health out-of-area placements, waiting times for treatment and the capacity of Community Diagnostic Centres. Members also sought further information relating to workforce vacancies, agency staffing, diagnostic performance and the use of restraint within mental health settings.

The Committee received an update from the West Yorkshire Association of Acute Trusts (WYAAT), the collaborative body bringing together the region's acute hospital trusts. Members reviewed progress on a number of regional programmes, including pathology, imaging, pharmacy aseptics, planned care and procurement. The Committee noted the implementation of new diagnostic technology, including artificial intelligence tools to support radiology services, and discussed how provider collaboration would contribute to the delivery of the NHS 10-Year Health Plan. Members also explored the implications of wider NHS reforms and changes to commissioning arrangements.

At its December 2025 meeting, the Committee considered the development of the West Yorkshire Integrated Neighbourhood Health Model. Members scrutinised emerging plans to shift care closer to communities, reduce reliance on hospital-based services and strengthen prevention, integrated working and neighbourhood-based care. The Committee highlighted the importance of workforce resilience, digital inclusion and ensuring services remain responsive to local community needs as implementation progresses.

The Committee also received a detailed update on Autism and ADHD assessment pathways across West Yorkshire. Members examined increasing demand for neurodevelopmental assessments, lengthy waiting times and the challenges associated with the Right to Choose pathway. The Committee reviewed proposals to establish a more consistent and equitable approach across West Yorkshire, including the development of unified clinical standards,

commissioning arrangements and community neurodiversity hubs. Members emphasised the importance of addressing inequalities in access, strengthening partnership working and ensuring early support was available regardless of diagnosis.

In December 2025, the Committee also scrutinised preparations for winter pressures across the health and care system. Members reviewed system readiness, including arrangements to support urgent and emergency care, discharge pathways, vaccination programmes and community-based services. Particular attention was given to ambulance response times, emergency department pressures, workforce resilience and monitoring arrangements. The Committee requested further updates on vaccination uptake, infection trends and emerging pressures across the system.

Throughout the year, the Committee provided challenge and sought assurance on the delivery of regional health services, ensuring that the interests of residents across West Yorkshire remained central to decision-making.

Continued scrutiny of ICB decisions at a West Yorkshire level is more important than ever. As strategic decisions regarding service transformation, resource allocation and healthcare delivery are increasingly taken across the integrated care system, there remains a clear need for robust democratic oversight to ensure that the needs and interests of residents across all five district areas are appropriately considered. The Committee will therefore continue to play a key role in holding system partners to account and providing constructive challenge on matters that impact communities across West Yorkshire.

Calderdale and Kirklees Joint Health Scrutiny Committee

Committee Membership

During the year, Councillor Elizabeth Smaje served as Chair of the Committee, supported by Councillor Colin Hutchinson as Co-Chair. Membership of the Committee also included Councillors Jo Lawson, Ashleigh Robinson and Hannah McKerchar, and Councillors Ashley Evans and Ann Kingston representing Calderdale Council.

Committee Highlights

The Calderdale and Kirklees Joint Health Scrutiny Committee continued to provide joint scrutiny of significant NHS service developments affecting residents across both local authority areas during 2025/26.

A key focus of the Committee's work was the ongoing Calderdale and Huddersfield NHS Foundation Trust (CHFT) hospital reconfiguration programme. In October 2025, Members received a detailed update on progress with the programme, including the completion of the new Learning and Development Centre at Calderdale Royal Hospital, the construction of the multi-storey car park, and preparations for the submission of the Full Business Case for the new clinical building. The Committee scrutinised the assumptions underpinning the programme, including hospital bed capacity, the development of community-based services, future service transition arrangements, and the longer-term investment plans for Huddersfield Royal Infirmary.

The Committee also considered an update on maternity services across Calderdale, Kirklees and Wakefield. Members scrutinised workforce recruitment and retention, service capacity, health inequalities, neonatal provision, and the availability of birth choices for women and families. Particular attention was given to the work being undertaken to address disparities in outcomes for women from ethnic minority communities and those living in areas of deprivation, alongside measures to improve access to information and support.

During the year, Members also visited the Learning and Development Centre at Calderdale Royal Hospital, where they were given an insight into the Trust's training facilities and workforce development programmes. One memorable demonstration included a simulated caesarean birth using specialist training equipment. While scrutiny committees are accustomed to examining complex reports and challenging business cases, observing a baby being delivered in a training environment was a rather different form of scrutiny. Fortunately, the simulation was a success, the baby arrived safely, and Members were able to leave any thoughts of a career change firmly behind them.



Figure 7 - Visit to The Learning Centre September 2025



Figure 8 - Viewing the specialist simulation equipment used in the training of NHS staff.



Figure 9 - Viewing the specialist simulation equipment used in the training of NHS staff.

In March 2026, the Committee considered the Full Business Case for the new clinical building at Calderdale Royal Hospital. Members examined the strategic, financial and operational case for the development and sought assurances regarding construction impacts, workforce sustainability, accessibility, environmental performance, digital innovation, bed capacity, rehabilitation services, and future community care provision. The Committee was satisfied that the proposals would support improved patient care, modernise healthcare facilities, and contribute to addressing health inequalities across Calderdale and Kirklees. Effective scrutiny arrangements will remain in place to consider significant service changes arising from the reconfiguration programme and to monitor progress against the anticipated benefits for patients, staff and local communities.

West Yorkshire Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Committee Membership

The Scrutiny Committee is made up of 15 cross-party 'backbench' councillors from across West Yorkshire and 1 from York who are not members of any authority's 'cabinet', executive board or a decision-making committee. The Committee is chaired by Cllr Barry Anderson (since 2023) who's supported in his work by Vice Chairs Cllr Richard Smith (since 2021) and Cllr Matt Edwards (since 2024).

The members for this municipal year 2025/26 were:

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 Joe Thompson	*Cllr Jonathan Timbers*
	Cllr Peter Hunt (until February)	*Cllr Geraldine Carter (until January)*
Kirklees	Cllr Harry McCarthy	*Cllr James Homewood*
	Cllr Richard Smith	*Cllr Mark Thompson*
	Cllr John Lawson	*Cllr Andrew Marchington*
Leeds	Cllr Kate Haigh	*Cllr Pauleen Grahame*
	Cllr Hannan Bithell	*Cllr Jordan Bowden*
	Cllr Barry Anderson	*Cllr Matthew Robinson*
	Cllr Andy Rontree	*Cllr Mahalia France-Mir (until January)*
Wakefield	Cllr Richard Forster	*Cllr Julie Craig*
	Cllr Betty Rhodes	*Cllr Deb Nicholls*
York	Cllr Dave Merrett	*Cllr Jason Rose*

Each member is assigned a deputy member who they work with as a partner to support them. Their deputy may substitute for them at meetings (as can any other member from the same council and party as them).

Mayoral ‘Soft Power’ influence

The West Yorkshire Mayor took questions at the 2nd May committee and recommendations made by the Scrutiny Committee to the Mayor covered –

- Communication and leadership of the devolution agenda.
- Effectiveness and depth of engagement with local councils and councillors.
- Evidencing outcomes achieved from Mayor’s “soft power” activity and public profile e.g. trade missions and representations to central government.
- Ensuring there is accountability for persistent, unresolved local issues which impact West Yorkshire as a whole.

The full recommendations report and subsequent responses from the West Yorkshire Mayor are published on the Scrutiny website here.

Governance and Decision Making

On 24 July 2025 the Combined Authority approved a new School Travel Policy aiming to ensure there was a consistent, affordable and sustainable approach to managing school bus services to secondary schools in the future ahead of Bus Franchising. This decision was “Called In” due to concerns about the consultation process and decision-making pathway. The Call-In session was held on 22 August 2025 and, whilst the decision was ultimately released for implementation by the Committee, discussion and evidence highlighted several concerns around the Combined Authority’s governance, committee structures, decision-making pathways, report clarity and consultation and engagement approach.

The full recommendations were published on the scrutiny website here

Committee Structure Changes

The Combined Authority accepted Scrutiny’s recommendation to review its committee structure and meeting schedule to ensure the Authority is prepared to deliver its new responsibilities under the Devolution Act (which became law in Spring 2026). A joint working group of Scrutiny and Audit Committee members were consulted throughout this review process which concluded that a more streamlined structure with fewer committees – a reduction from 10 to 5 committees – overall and three key decision-making boards chaired by the Mayor to make mayoral and non-mayoral function decisions was the most efficient and accountable way to exercise new powers under the nine “areas of competence” and Integrated Settlement devolved funding model outlined in the Devolution Act.

Devolution readiness

The Scrutiny Chair and a scrutiny working group assessed how ready the Combined Authority was for further devolution, including maintaining oversight of:

- negotiations with government on their Outcomes Framework,
- negotiations on Integrated Settlement funding levels,

- new powers being sought for mayors and combined authorities under “Right to Request”
- development of the Combined Authority’s own internal outcomes framework (i.e. Key Performance Indicators and targets).

The Devolution Act 2026 introduces a new “Local Scrutiny Committee” system strengthening Scrutiny powers and accountability arrangements. to go live from 1 April 2027 for combined authorities designated as “Established Mayoral Strategic Authorities” (‘EMSAs’), like West Yorkshire. The next municipal year will be a “transitional” year focused on preparing the scrutiny function to implement reconstitute as a “Local Scrutiny Committee” from April 2027, providing scrutiny with the new powers and responsibilities.

Contact the Governance Team:

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