



Kirklees Council
Kirklees Democracy Commission Cross Party Working Group

Tuesday 17 December 2019

- Present: Councillor Cathy Scott (Chair)
 Councillor Michael Watson
 Councillor Alison Munro
 Councillor Will Simpson
 Councillor Yusra Hussain
- Apologies: Councillor John Taylor
 Councillor Andrew Cooper
- In Attendance: Carl Whistlecraft – Head of Democracy Service
 Vina Randhawa – Active Citizens and Places Manager
 Michelle Ross – Children and Young People’s Engagement Officer
 Diane Sims – Senior Communications Officer
 Spencer Wilson – Communication Officer
 Evie Whittingham – Kirklees Young Commissioner
 Vaneeza Ahsan – Kirklees Young Commissioner
 Will Roebuck (Observer)

1. Notes of Previous Meeting

In consideration of the notes of the previous meeting specific reference was made by Councillor Munro to item 2 (programme update) where the discussion referred to the feasibility or otherwise of including councillor information with Council tax bills. The working group discussed the material considerations and merits of this approach and concluded, overall, it was legitimate to explore the feasibility of this proposal in light of the wider objective to raise the profile of councillors with citizens.

AGREED as a correct record.

2. The Councillor Role

The working group considered a paper which set out the collaborative work which had taken place to develop a new Ward councillor role profile. Councillor Scott and Councillor Taylor had provided leadership on behalf of the working group in taking this work forward which had involve detailed engagement with councillors, council staff and citizens.

A copy of the first draft of the role profile was appended to the report. The consideration of the report the working group made reference to the following:

- The extent to which the expectations with regards to skills brackets as set out in the role profile) were realistic. In light of this specific amendments were made to this section of the role profile;
- The importance of ensuring that the role profile is easy to understand and set out in plain language;
- The need to ensure that the role profile is a live document which has impact in a number of areas, including wider staff and citizen awareness of the councillor role and as a tool for candidate recruitment.

AGREED that the consequential amendments to the role profile be made and dialogue take place with Councillors Scott and Taylor to determine the next steps with regards to sign off, rollout and promotion.

3. Officer / Councillor Protocol

In the context of putting councillors at the heart of what we do, the working group considered the most up to date version of the Officer /Councillor Protocol. The working group noted that this document constituted a mixture of behaviours, conduct issues and wider expectations governing the relationship between officers and councillors.

In consideration of the document the working group made reference to the following:

- The importance of making the document and the key messages within it more accessible. A plain language version, drawing out the key issues and messages, should be developed;
- The general issue of council officers working in a Ward setting and understanding the importance of ensuring councillors are aware of the work they are planning and undertaking. This should be more explicit in the protocol;
- The need to think through how the protocol is brought to life in a number of settings in order to facilitate both officer and councillor understanding. This should form part of a wider campaign and feature in both councillor and officer induction.

AGREED that the above mentioned points be used as a basis for informing the next stages of the work.

4. Growing a Stronger Youth Council - Update

The working group received an update from Evie Whittingham and Vaneeza Ahsan ([Kirklees Young Commissioners](#)) setting out the outcomes and recommendations of the Kirklees Youth Council report – [Growing a stronger youth council](#).

The working group noted that the report, published in October 2019, incorporated the outcomes of engagement with 1,800 people. The work explored how children and young people in Kirklees feel about having a voice, getting involved in community life, and how we can help them to grow the skills, confidence and connections that they want, in the way that they want. The overall intention was to understand what works for young people and to make key recommendations for the Kirklees Youth Council moving forward.

Evie and Vaneeza introduced the key components and findings of the report which had been broken down as follows with recommendations (30 in total) accompanying each chapter:

- Growing young citizens (about the youth council's overall approach)
- Growing safe spaces (about developing Democracy Friendly Schools)
- Growing understanding (about local democratic education)
- Growing relationships (about connections with councillors and others)
- Growing a stronger voice (about involving young people in decisions)

In recognising and welcoming the significant amount of work that had taken place the working group made reference to the following:

- The central importance of schools in the context of future work. The proposal in terms of Democracy Friendly Schools (and associated recommendations) was welcomed;
- The extent to which schools have engaged (or will engage) in this work;
- The extent to which resources and support were already in place to facilitate the delivery of the recommendations;
- The importance of councillors playing a significant role in facilitating and progressing the conversations with schools;

AGREED that:

- The final report and its findings be noted and welcomed;
- All young people involved in the report's production be congratulated for their excellent work;
- The work in respect of Democracy Friendly Schools be particularly supported;
- A letter be sent encouraging all Kirklees councillors to support the Democracy Friendly Schools work;

- A statement of support be included in the promotional information for schools;
- Support be given to participating in youth council activities in schools, as appropriate.

5. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Working Group will take place on Monday 27 January, 11.00 a.m. – 1.00 p.m. in a venue to be determined.