



Kirklees Council
Kirklees Democracy Commission Cross Party Working Group

Monday 27 January 2020

- Present: Councillor John Taylor (Chair)
 Councillor Donna Bellamy
 Councillor Alison Munro
 Councillor Will Simpson
- Apologies: Councillor Cathy Scott
 Councillor Andrew Cooper
 Councillor Yusra Hussain
- In Attendance: Carl Whistlecraft – Head of Democracy Service
 Deborah Nicholson, Democracy Manager (Councillor Support and Liaison)
 Sharon Salvanos, Electoral Services Manager
 Diane Sims – Senior Communications Officer
 Spencer Wilson – Communication Officer

1. Notes of Previous Meeting

AGREED as a correct record.

2. The Councillor Role and How it is Supported

Deborah Nicholson updated the Working Group on the work that had taken place to realign resources and support to assist in supporting the changing councillor role. Such work is linked to the wider strategic objective to put councillors at the heart of what we do.

The Working Group noted that in this will see an increase in the direct and dedicated support available to Councillors resulting in beginning to meet the following outcomes. Councillors will:

- Have the tools, confidence, skills, knowledge and information to carry out their Ward role effectively;
- Have a central point of contact to assist them in case work management and issue resolution on behalf of the citizens they represent;

- Be equipped with the appropriate technology and digital capability to effectively carry out their community leadership responsibilities;
- Have an identified officer to act as a conduit and problem solver with the wider organisation;
- Be placed at the heart of citizen engagement and equipped with the insight and intelligence to translate this into tangible actions.
- Have in full view the resources and opportunities to facilitate Ward and Sub Ward priority outcomes.

In practice this means:

- Establishing a dedicated Councillor Support and Liaison team that is a central point of contact for all councillors;
- Creating an advocacy function for councillors to support and facilitate management and resolution of case work;
- Increasing the scope and potential of the Councillor Account as the principal tool for the provision of Ward based information, news and intelligence;
- Introducing direct support to facilitate the Active Citizens and Places Team in planning citizen engagement and inputting and collating the outcomes of such Place Standard engagement. This will ensure councillors are equipped with the outcomes and insight arising from place based engagement in a swift and timely manner;
- Ensuring that all relevant grant and funding mechanisms are captured and monitored in a way that aligns with our developing approach to place based working;

The Working Group noted that the new Councillor Support & Liaison Team started their new roles on Monday 13th January. The team had undergone an intensive induction and training period where they received in-depth training in all areas of their new role. This has already included meeting Councillors who have been part of the induction and thereby beginning to form good working relationships with Councillors and understanding the importance of placing Councillors at the heart of the Council.

Work is underway to put in place internal systems and process so that the Councillor Support & Liaison Team can carry out an efficient advocacy role and support Councillors in the management and resolution of their casework work.

A small number of Councillors will be identified to trial advocacy support, which will be followed by assessment and inclusion of any required changes following the trial period.

Communication will take place within the organisation and discussions will take place with Councillors to discuss their individual requirements. It is anticipated that following the trial, advocacy will be offered to Councillors elected in May and rolled out to all Councillors in the new Municipal Year.

In consideration of the information received the Working Group made reference to the following;

- The intended impact on response times to case work;
- The importance of ensuring that councillors involved in the pilot phase are the “right mix”;
- The need to ensure that there is an awareness that case work is not limited to council services. Partners and other agencies need to be part of the thinking;
-

Councillor Taylor provided an update on the work that he and Councillor Scott had been leading on in relation to the revised ward councillor role profile. From a developmental perspective he confirmed that the work was now complete. The next steps involves discussions with Leading Members and Group Business Managers with a view to adoption and roll out. This would involve sharing with staff in a way that helps progress and facilitate wider cultural change. It would form part of the next campaign burst in respect of putting councillors at the heart of what we do.

The Working Group made reference to the following;

- The importance of using the role profile as a tool to foster wider understanding within the organisation in terms of the work a councillor does;
- The need to use the profile as part of candidate selection and new councillor induction;
- Linking the profile to the wider plans to develop a Freshers Fair for councillors.

Diane Sims provided an update on the [Networked Councillors project](#). The Working Group noted that previously they had agreed to try out some practical tools and activities to help citizens and councillors connect and work together for civic good, based on what we’ve learned from our councillors and citizens.

Diane explained that some pilot activities in two wards in February 2020, and learning activities are being planned for May 2020. Priorities identified by councillors include: examples of good content, practical and themed sessions, and templates (also popular were: informal discussions, collaboration with citizens and peer support). Priorities identified by citizens include: knowing the basics about local democracy, having timely information, growing relationships and choosing the right tools.

The Working Group noted that the profile of councillors in their wards clearly matters to both citizens and councillors, so work is focussed on finding tools and approaches that will work in our wards.

In consideration of the information received the Working Group made reference to the following:

- Being mindful of not necessarily perceiving Wards as readily identifiable places. For many citizens they are an artificial boundary;
- Trying to ensure there is a mix of urban and rural areas as part of the pilot. Getting the area right is more important than rushing the pilot;
- The extent to which other collaborative software should form part of the work.

AGREED that the progress report be noted.

3. Place Standard Engagement - Update

The Working Group received an update report on the work that had been carried out in respect of place based citizen engagement using the Place Standard tool.

By way of a reminder, an important part of the Democracy Commission's findings had involved the intention to move away from transactional consultation to an approach that involved genuine conversations and engagement with citizens in the places that they identify with. The council had adopted the Place Standard as the tool by which all such engagement should take place. This was agreed at Annual Council in May 2019.

The report explained that the council's approach to citizen engagement has progressed significantly over the past year and key achievements are summarised as follows:-

- Citizen engagement principles are becoming embedded and our approach to place based engagement using the Place Standard continues to grow.
- A citizen engagement reference group (CERG) was established in November 2018 to provide oversight and advice on all significant place based citizen engagement planned by the council, ensure that engagement accords with the citizen engagement principles and provide advice in planning and delivering engagement.
- CERG meets monthly to consider and co-ordinate planned engagement activity to agreed standards and principles.
- Over 200 people have received training in delivering place standard conversations. This includes staff from 26 service areas, 12 councillors, 6 voluntary organisations and 39 residents.
- The broad framework and staged approach developed consists of:-
 1. Undertaking place standard engagement to understand '**how good is our place**'
 2. '**Making it better together**' - developing ward and neighbourhood action plans
 3. Place standard re-engagement to assess '**how are we doing**'
- To date place standard engagement has been delivered in 13 neighbourhoods across 6 wards engaging 3,540 citizens, summarised in the table below:-

Ward	Neighbourhood/Village	Numbers Engaged
Kirkburton	Shepley Village	400
	Shelley Village	200
Birstall and Birkenshaw	Birstall	200
	Fieldhead	
Holme Valley North	Meltham	700
	Honley	464
Newsome	Berry Brow Flats	80
	Hudds Town centre Blueprint	978
Colne Valley	Linthwaite	200

Golcar	Cowlersley	58
	Longwood	260
	Milnsbridge	
	Golcar Village	
Total		3,540

NOTE: citizen profile information is available by age, gender and postcode

- Huddersfield Town Centre Blueprint engagement has received very positive feedback from planning officers for the successful engagement and depth and quality of feedback received about Huddersfield town centre. The feedback is now being used to test and inform the blueprint baseline and activity.
- Feedback from other place standard engagement is being used to inform key pieces of work, for example the Healthy Streets initiative and Shaping Places funding proposal.
- The pace and volume of engagement activity using the place standard tool has been sustained and further engagement is planned in 12 neighbourhoods covering 7 wards as follows:-

Ward	Neighbourhood/Village
Ashbrow	Sheepridge/Deighton
	Bradley
	Fartown
	Fixby and Cowcliffe
Birstall and Birkenshaw	East Bierley
Dewsbury East	Chickenley
	Earlsheaton
	Dewsbury Town Centre Blueprint
Dalton	Waterloo
Batley East	Soothill
Greenhead	Paddock
Newsome	Huddersfield University Campus

In consideration of the report the Working Group made the following comments:

- The importance of, over time, looking at emerging themes and patterns that are common across different areas. These should begin to inform policy, budget and service planning decisions;
- Examples of where place based engagement has been led by citizens and communities rather than the council;
- The need to consistently use the Place Standard methodology across the borough so that we have consistent insight and the opportunity to re-engage in a consistent way to assess progress.

AGREED that the progress report be noted.

4. Improving Electoral Registration

Following the discussion that took place at the Working Group meeting in November, Sharon Salvanos (Electoral Services Manager) provided an update on the work that is taking place to improve voter registration in the context of the Commission's recommendations.

Sharon shared detailed information with regards to the wide range of activities undertaken by the electoral outreach team which had included:

- NCS planned activities over July and August starting at Storthes Hall and then moving to Springfield College at Dewsbury;
- C & K careers Next Step Event end of August – engaging with young people to encourage them to register to vote
- Involved with the Democracy Champions programme through the Cabinet Office
- Kirklees apprentice's induction;
- Student voice sessions with Kirklees college and voter registration drive;
- Employability Kirklees sessions at Storthes hall;
- Voter Registration Drive at Springfield College Dewsbury in partnership with Kirklees College around National Democracy Week;
- Voter Registration Drive at New College Huddersfield around National Democracy Week working with Conscious Youth;
- Voter Registration Drive at Mirfield College Huddersfield around National Democracy Week;
- C & K Get Inspired Careers Event at John Smiths Stadium;
- Voter Registration Drive at Greenhead College;
- Kirklees college parliament meetings;
- Careers Convention at Newsome High School

In terms of planned activity initiatives include:

- Meeting with the University of Huddersfield to progress work in respect of the student portal;
- Meeting with ASK (apprentice support and Knowledge) to progress working with high schools and other apprentice groups;
- Meeting with Deaf/Blind UK, with the Yorkshire and Humberside Outreach Officer to discuss ways of working together and supporting people who face barriers registering to vote and voting in a polling station;
- Meeting with the district Commissioner for Huddersfield Scouts with the view to rolling sessions out across North and South Kirklees;
- Delivering sessions with Huddersfield Giants apprentice's around voter registration;
- Sessions with Huddersfield Town apprentices;
- Events with Guides group at Salendine Nook with a view to the offer being rolled out to all scout and guide groups and also too Army/RAF/Navy Cadets and West Yorkshire police cadets;
- Sessions with West Yorkshire Fire Service;
- Contact will be made again with Special Schools;
- Attending the LGBT event at the Brunswick Centre to network and increase awareness

Sharon explained that the proactive outreach work was beginning to result in positive outcomes. Kirklees currently has the highest number registered to vote than it has

ever had. The Working Group welcomed this news and made reference to the following points:

- The extent to which voter registration could be flagged in the regular correspondence that the council has with residents e.g, council tax bills.
Sharon undertook to explore and report back;
- The availability of data which would help the working group understand all breakdown of registration by particular age groups and data on the number of residents who can register, the number on the register and the number who actually vote. Sharon explained that this was not possible due to limitations of data held and issues relating to GDPR;
- The ways in which people who are receiving care in their own homes are supported in terms of registration;
- The extent to which we are working closely with front line workers e.g. social workers to encourage registration.

AGREED that the progress report be noted.

5. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Working Group will take place on Monday 9 March 2020, 11.00 a.m. – 12.30 p.m. in the Council Chamber, Batley Town Hall.