

**Minutes  
Environment Scrutiny Panel**

**17 October 2007  
5.30 p.m.  
Abbey Leisure Centre, Pity Me**

**Present:** Councillors Wolstenhome (in the Chair), Carr, Colledge, Crooks, Kelly, Moderate, Simpson, Turnbull and Wilkinson

**Also in Attendance:** Councillor Kellett.

**Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Martin, Mavin & Mitchell.

**Minutes**

Minutes of the meeting of 19 September, 2007, were agreed as a correct record.

**Recycling – Waste Management in City of Durham**

Members discussed how they should approach acquiring information from City Council departments on recycling and what they were recycling.

***Note:** 5.31 p.m. Councillor Moderate joined the meeting.*

Members suggested that a questionnaire should be sent to all departments asking for information on what they recycle. If no response is received then the line manager or Head of Department should come along to the panel to give information.

Councillor Turnbull informed the Panel that different department would have different types of waste to recycle, e.g., Tradesmen would have timber, metal etc. whereas office based would have mostly paper.

Members were also concerned about green bins (boxes) not being emptied in their respective areas.

**Climate Change**

Members discussed who they should invite to come along to the next Panel meeting to discuss Climate Change. Members agreed that they should look at City of Durham policy on Climate Change and benchmark with other authorities in the district to see what they do in this area.

The Chair suggested that the Planning Department and Building Control should be involved and proposed that encouragement should be given to applicants to include eco friendly designs.

The Chair also suggested that a representative from the County Council who had input into the 'Bio- building' at Aykley Heads should be invited and that Councillor Mitchell had advised him of a contact at Durham University.

The Chair also suggested that the appropriate Government department be contacted for information. Also the Chair mentioned the new Home Information Packs (HIP) have a five year guarantee on new builds.

Councillor Wilkinson suggested that they required five or six ideas rather than any in-depth lectures.

Members suggested that City of Durham vehicles should be economical and it should be checked whether they use bio-diesel.

***Note:** 5.50 p.m. Councillor Kellett left the meeting.*

### **Any Other Business**

The Chair reminded the Panel Members of the forth coming visit to the Thornley Digester on 24<sup>th</sup> October and asked if all those who had said they were going had received their papers.

### **Actions for Next Meeting**

- Investigations be carried out to find out what policies other Authorities have for Climate Change.
- Invite the Sustainable Development Manager to attend next meeting.
- Make enquiries at County Council re Bio building and invite those involved.
- Develop skeleton questionnaire for Heads of Service.

Meeting terminated at 5.55 p.m.

## PLANNING SHEET FOR ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY PANEL

<b>TOPIC FOR SCRUTINY – Climate Change</b>
<b>Purpose of Review</b>  To review the City of Durham’s approach to the problem of Climate Change, i.e. how the Council can act to help mitigate the causes of Climate Change.
<b>Specific issues to be looked at</b>  Links with other departments. Links with outside organisations. Staffing. Resources. Best Value.
<b>Required Outcomes</b>  The best practice for the City of Durham in relation to this function, any improvements as felt required.
<b>Possible Risks</b>  Unrealistic Expectations. Budgetary Issues.

<b>KEY TASKS</b>	
<p><b>Documents/evidence/research</b></p> <p><i>What?</i></p> <p>Cabinet Report – 18 July 2007 “Climate Change”</p> <p><i>Why?</i></p> <p>To provide background information regarding the subject for Members</p>	<b>When</b>
<p><b>Consultation</b></p> <p><i>Who/what?</i></p> <p><i>Why?</i></p>	<b>When</b>
<p><b>Witnesses</b></p> <p><i>Who?</i></p> <p>External Organisations</p> <p>City of Durham Officers – Jonathan Elmer – Sustainable Development Manager</p> <p><i>Why?</i></p> <p>These are the relevant stakeholders and technical Officers required to give Members information relating to the topic.</p>	<b>When</b>
<p><b>Project start date:</b> September 2007</p>	<p><b>Draft report deadline:</b> <b>Project completion date:</b></p>

***First Draft***

## **REPORT OF THE ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY PANEL**

### **Review of the Topics of Fly-tipping, Recycling and Litter Pickers**

The Panel was tasked with reviewing the topics of Fly-tipping, Recycling and Litter Picker, all of which had been looked at previously by the Panel (considered by Cabinet 26 June 2006, 02 August 2006 and 20 September 2006 respectively).

#### **1. BACKGROUND**

Initially the Panel had looked at the three topics separately, though it was acknowledged that they were fundamentally linked.

#### **2. AIMS**

It was the remit of the Panel to consider any changes since the topics were originally scrutinised, and where necessary offer further suggestions.

Officers from the Environment and Leisure Services Department attended Panel meetings to help bring Members up-to-speed with the current position of the Council, and with any relevant progress in relation to recommendations made by the Panel in their initial Reports.

#### **3. ACTIONS**

The City of Durham's newly appointed Environmental Services Manager, Mr Chris Tomlinson, attended the July meeting of the Panel to brief Members as regards the topics of Fly-tipping, Recycling and Litter Pickers. In addition, the Council's Sustainable Development Manager, Mr Jonathan Elmer was in attendance at the September meeting to provide Members with further information relating to internal waste management procedures.

##### **3.1 Fly-tipping**

The City of Durham together with several other neighbouring Local Authorities fund a Joint Fly-tipping Enforcement Officer (Mr Jim Crammon), based at County Hall, Durham. It was a recommendation of the Panel's previous report that this support be continued and this was reiterated.

It was noted that the City of Durham's Neighbourhood Wardens are able to issue Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) under the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 (CNEA) for offenses relating to littering, dog fouling, graffiti etc. However, for each type of FPN being issued, the Wardens would require the relevant authorisations and training in accordance with the Council's enforcement policy.

The City of Durham Website has a section containing information relating to fly-tipping including the penalties for doing so and what to do if you have witnesses an instance of fly-tipping. Also the City of Durham Website has links to the relevant pages on the Durham County Council Website, relating to fly-tipping.

However, there was no information about individuals' duty of care to us reputable, registered waste contractors (i.e. if waste fly-tipped by a disreputable contractor can be traced back to an individual, the individual could be liable for the case of fly-tipping).

An subject on which Members had expressed concerns was as regards paint containers being fly-tipped as they cannot be disposed of via the normal household collection. Accordingly, some people, including unscrupulous Contractors may not dispose of them correctly.

Another point of interest to the Panel was whether, in cases where allotment sites had been purchased and the sites were being used for fly-tipping, did the City of Durham have the authority to force the landowner to clear or tidy the site.

## **3.2 Recycling**

### **3.2.1 Recycling – General Public**

Stickers promoting recycling had been placed on to residents bins periodically and this had been seen to have a positive influence on recycling rates. Accordingly, the Panel had recommended that this continue.

Whilst the Panel wished to encourage people to reuse bags for shopping, Officer believed that any such campaign should be nationally led. In fact the Durham County Council had wished to have local schemes whereby shops would charge for plastic carrier bags, but the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) wished to delay any local initiatives in lieu of a national agenda. This would follow the trial in Ireland where paper bags have replaced plastic bags and reuse of other bags was also more widespread.

Some neighbouring Local Authorities charge for the collection of "bulky waste", unlike the City of Durham. However, it was noted that where Authorities have charged for these types of collection that there has been only minor corresponding increase in fly-tipping and this too was only in the initial stages.

Some Companies that take unwanted can prove to be quite selective and this can lead to delays in removal of items for collection. The Sustainable Development Manager is looking at further possibilities of working with different reuse and recycling organisations in the future.

The current Contract with Premier Waste as regards the Kerb-It recycling collection runs until April 2008, and the Contract will go back out to Tender for another 2 year contract. Members were keen to see, if possible, other types of waste be taken and recycled by whichever company secures the new contract.

The refurbishment of "white goods" for resale by a company working for, or with, a Local Authority (similar to "Bulky Bobs" – a scheme ran in Liverpool) were of more use as practical training for apprentice repair engineers and often these type of programmes / facilities are heavily subsidised in order to maintain the training aspect. Accordingly, it would be not be feasible for the City of Durham to operate an in-house scheme on a similar scale.

### **3.2.2 Recycling – Internal Waste Strategy, City of Durham**

From initial observations, it appears that the City of Durham only recycles office paper. The Durham Company currently collects this and they sell on the paper this on, i.e. they company is ran as a commercial interest. The City of Durham does not pay The Durham Company for this service.

Some City of Durham Council Departments may have waste specific to their areas or work, e.g. Property Services may have wood and metal waste that may be recyclable.

It was noted that Durham University employs a company that collects their waste paper and shred the documents as necessary, thereby saving their staff's time. Whilst it was agreed as being a good idea in principle, certain Departments may need to keep a strict control on confidential and personal information that they hold on behalf of the Council and that in some instances it may indeed be necessary to shred documents in-house.

Some Members of the Panel felt that it may be preferable to have a policy in place to specify how different waste is to be disposed of internally by the Council rather than the "championing" of the subject by individuals in each section. Whilst this was an option, it was felt that it would be more effective to raise awareness and motivate staff to want to minimise waste.

### **3.3 Litter Pickers**

The City of Durham's Neighbourhood Wardens have the authority to issue FPNs for littering offences which now includes chewing gum and cigarette butts.

The City of Durham has achieved high standards of street cleanliness across the District, as shown by not only the Best Value Performance Indicator BV199, but also by the high standards recorded in Local Environment Quality (LEQ) surveys which contain more stringent criteria than BV199. Also LEQs take into account more than just litter; they include factors such as graffiti and fly-posting. Areas in which the City of Durham did have scope for improvement are regarding the level of detritus within the street scene and also in removing litter along the Riverbank footpaths.

Whilst it was agreed that the use of "normal" wheelie bins as dog foul waste bins was not the most visually attractive solution, they were cheap, durable and practical (especially in the ease and safety of emptying, i.e. they do not require the staff to delve into them to recover the waste, they can be uncoupled from their anchor point and emptied as any other wheelie bin).

An idea that the Panel came up with was to source funding from local pet stores or veterinary practices by allowing advertisements to be placed on the dog foul bins. Officers explained that a similar idea had been trialled at another Authority and the sponsors had proved unreliable and that whilst the idea did have merit, practically it was difficult to achieve.

## **4. OUTCOMES**

### **4.1 Fly-tipping**

It was noted progress was being made in relation to tacking fly-tippers, with a second Fly-tipping Enforcement Officer being appointed to help with the workload across the County, with a mind to splitting the area into two divisions with an Officer for each area.

As evidence is key to the Fly-tipping Enforcement Officers securing convictions, the City of Durham's Neighbourhood Wardens may need additional training to ensure that evidence is collected in the correct manner so that is pertinent and admissible.

The City of Durham would aim to provide additional information on the City of Durham Website to include information relating to an individuals' duty of care for the correct disposal of waste.

Used paint tins can be easily disposed of at the County Council operated Household Waste and Recycling Centres (HWRCs).

Where sites such as allotments are being used an unauthorised tip, if the site constituted a "statutory nuisance", then this would be dealt with by the City of Durham's Environmental Health Section. However, if an area was being used as an unofficial waste disposal site, the Environment Agency would be the appropriate body to investigate.

### **4.2 Recycling**

#### **4.2.1 Recycling – General Public**

Durham County Council secured funding from Waste & Resources Action Programme (WRAP) for "swing tickets" (similar to luggage tags) which affix to the handle on Residents' wheelie bins. As mentioned above, previous schemes where stickers had been placed on bins led to an increase in the public's uptake of recycling.

The successful Green Waste Recycling bin trial in the Carrville and Belmont areas may be expanded to encompass more of the District if grants or funding can be secured. However, any decisions regarding this would be influenced by the Durham County Council's Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy as if plans for an increase in the use of aerobic digestion are approved, then it could be that any pre-emptive decision to increase green waste recycling via the current trial system could be unnecessarily costly and be rendered redundant by the diversion of such waste to an aerobic digester. Also an increased use of collection vehicles would have an associated increase in carbon emissions. Again changes in Local Government across the County area may have an impact on any such increase in the provision of green waste bins.

A rough estimate of the uptake of recycling via the Premier Advanced Recycling Centre (PARC) recycling scheme within the trial areas was in the region of 70%. Problems as regarding splitting of the orange bags had been noted and thicker purple bags have now been issued to Residents of Framwellgate Moor and Newton Hall. The bags new colour also minimised the confusion between the recycling bags and orange Sainsbury bags containing general waste.



#### **4.2.2 Recycling – Internal Waste Strategy, City of Durham**

“Office Champions” will be selected to help raise and maintain the profile of best practise for recycling within various sections of the Council, with these Officers to be picked by Department Heads. Appropriate training will be provided by the Sustainable Development Manager, and the process will be undertaken in conjunction with the Street Scene Manager and the Support Services Managers.

The Council hopes to move towards recycling glass, cans and card in addition to office paper in the future.

As the process of reviewing internal waste management is at an initial stage, it was felt that it may be beneficial to look at this particular issue in 6-8 months time to check up on progress.

#### **4.3 Litter Pickers**

Following the smoking ban introduced in England on 01 July 2007, some bins within the City have been retrofitted with ashtrays in their top surface. Also it was noted that some Public Houses have installed their own cigarette bins themselves as a result of the smoking ban.

Two members of staff have redeployed to litter picking and tidying duties to improve the quality of these important prominent City Centre footpaths including those along the riverbanks. In addition, there will be provision of extra litter bins and seating subject to agreement with the City of Durham’s Cultural Services Department.

To help improve the situation as regard detritus within the street scene, the City of Durham may be able to replace the existing ride-in compact pavement sweeper with a two new machines on reduced leases. This would allow the cleaning rota to be increased to six-weekly from the current twelve weekly, subject to approval.

### **5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Many of the recommendations previously made by the Panel on the topics of Fly-tipping, Recycling and Litter Pickers had been pursued and it is clear that work is ongoing to improve services and to ensure best practice in these areas. From the information provided to the Panel by Officers the following recommendations were made:-

#### **Fly-tipping**

1. That as per the previous Report, the City of Durham continues to support the Joint Fly-tipping Enforcement Officer(s).
2. That Panel approves of any programme that delivers relevant training and authorities required to enable the Neighbourhood Wardens to carry out their duties more effectively, in relation to the issuing of fixed penalty notices for various littering type offences.
3. That, unless already done so, information relating to an individuals duty of care for the disposal of waste properly, even by Contractors working on an individuals property, be made clearly available on the City of Durham’s Website.

## **Recycling**

4. The Panel supports the continued free bulky collection service by the City of Durham.
5. That within future contracts for recycling, that the possibility of including further waste streams be considered.

## **Litter Pickers**

6. The Panel welcomes the provision of additional litter pickers and would wish this extra provision to be upheld.