

**DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL**

**At a Meeting of the Scrutiny Sub-Committee for Looking After the Environment** held at the County Hall, Durham on **Monday 19 March 2007** at **10.00 a.m.**

**COUNCILLOR CARROLL** in the Chair

**Members:**

Councillors Armstrong, Burlison, Douthwaite, Gray, Manton, Mason, Stradling, Trippet.

**Co-opted:**

Mr D Easton, Mr D M Jones and Councillor Meikle.

**Other Members:**

Councillors Bowman, Coates, Chaplow, Iveson, Meir, Pendelbury and Williams.

Apologies were received from Councillors Bell, Pye, Tennant and Wade.

**A1 Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18 December 2006 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**A2 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**A3 Items from Co-opted Members**

There were no items from Co-opted Members. In response to questions about the work programme, Tom Bolton advised that the process of developing a scrutiny work programme for the coming year was underway.

**A4 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Performance Update of 2006/07**

The Sub Committee considered a report of the Head of Corporate Policy providing an update on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter performance and 2005/06 quartile positions for the authority's corporate priorities and the Best Value Performance Indicators for Looking After the Environment (for copy see file of Minutes).

Members expressed concern about the continuing fall in the estimated number of bus passenger journeys and the effect that operators decisions to cut services will have on future performance. Tom Bolton explained that meetings had taken place with District Councils and it was hoped to carry out a project on public transport.

Members also commented on the lack of information on the progress of the procurement process for the new waste management contract. In relation to BV82dii, household waste land filled, Rod Lugg explained that the County Council's performance had improved. A further digester is being constructed and when this comes into operation the County Council will have a combined recycling and composting rate of 35%.

**Resolved:**

That the report be noted.

**A5 Durham Heritage Coast – Update on Progress at Lime Kiln Gill**

The Sub Committee received a report of the Heritage Coast Officer providing an update on progress at Lime Kiln Gill.

Niall Benson explained that the re-siting of the car park in Lime Kiln Gill has been included in the wider Horden Denes project, which provides for improved, safer access and increased educational use for this part of the coast, with funding sought from the Heritage Lottery Fund. Considerable delays to this project have occurred for two reasons;

- the proposals of the Coal Authority for a passive minewater treatment plant
- the current prejudice against capital improvement to County Council Countryside sites where increased maintenance costs are likely to be incurred. This is a consequence of the reduction in the Countryside and Rights of Way revenue maintenance budget.

To enable delivery of the recommendation, other sources of finance are being sought. With regard to the Horden Denes project, Members of the Sub Committee were advised that given the prejudice against capital improvements on County Council owned countryside sites, the Heritage Coast Partnership will be seeking alternative lead partners for this significant local improvement. The Partnership is committed to seeing this area developed into a significant community asset.

It was further explained that the Heritage Coast Partnership have addressed 20 of the 22 recommendations in the Access to the Durham Coast Scrutiny Report. It was felt that this demonstrates that the Partnership has delivered real improvements and the Partnership Office expressed the view that ongoing County Council support over the next 3 years was crucial and Members were generally supportive of this.

Members expressed concern about the lack of progress on the Lime Kiln Gill car park and felt that the County Council's credibility with local people was at risk if the project was not completed. Reference was made to a potential funding source for this work to be carried out.

**Resolved:**

That the report be noted.

## **A6 Environment Strategy and Climate Change**

The Sub Committee received a presentation from Rod Lugg Head of Service, Environment and Steve Bhowmick Business Manager, Environment on the environment and climate change.

Steve Bhowmick explained that the County Durham Environment Strategy was agreed a year ago and is part of the Shared Vision for the Future County Durham Strategic Partnership.

Following a review of the Environment Strategy 2000 – 2005 nine aims have been identified based on:-

- Enriching landscape, biodiversity and geodiversity
- Improving towns and villages, conserving and enhancing the historic environment
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- Responding to climate change
- Developing sustainable transport
- Reducing resource consumption and waste
- Engaging communities in sustainable development
- Promoting environmentally aware business
- Finding the Resources – i.e. LAA

Rod Lugg explained the County Council's position in relation to climate change. There a number of international and national drivers for action. Climate change is a top priority for the Government and this includes

- Stern Review – economics Jan 2007
- Local Government White Paper Nov 2006
- Draft Climate Change Bill Mar 2007
- Planning Policy Statement 25 Flood Risk
- Draft Planning Policy Statement on Planning and Climate Change
- Code for Sustainable Homes - Building a Greener Future

As part of its public commitment to tackling the causes and effects of climate change, the County Council has signed the 'Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change' setting out its public commitment. Following consultation with LSP's and District Councils, the County Durham Climate Change Action Plan was produced and published in March 2006. A draft Carbon Management Plan has also been drafted and a corporate target of 2% year on year CO<sub>2</sub> emissions reduction has been set. Currently the County Council is failing to meet the target. An award winning Energy Labelling Scheme for DCC buildings has been delivered, although the majority of buildings are in the E - G categories.

Energy figures for 2005/06 show that consumption of gas in buildings is up 1%, whilst the consumption of electricity in buildings is up 8%. Consumption of electricity for street lighting is up 2%.

It is proposed to submit the following proposals to Corporate Management Team and Cabinet:

- All DCC Chief Officers to nominate Climate Change Champion for each DCC Service.
- Establish County Durham Climate Change Partnership Project (through Local Agenda 21 sustainable development partnership and County Durham Environment Partnership).
- Create DCC Carbon Reduction Management Post to reduce climate change and financial impacts of energy use.
- Co-ordinate action to reduce the risks posed to DCC services from current and future extreme weather.

Climate Change has been agreed as a Corporate Priority.

**Resolved:**

That the presentation be noted.