

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the Scrutiny Sub-Committee for Looking After the Environment held at the County Hall, Durham on **Monday 18 June 2007** at **10.00 a.m.**

COUNCILLOR N FOSTER in the Chair

Members:

Councillors Carr R, Douthwaite, Holroyd, Ord, Stelling, Stradling and Young

Co-opted:

Mr D Easton and Mr D M Jones.

Other Members:

Councillors Bowman, Mason Pendlebury and Shuttleworth

A1 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 19 March 2007 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.

A4 Future Priorities and Key Issues within the Sub Committee Remit

The Sub Committee received a presentation from J Richardson, Corporate Director, Environment (for copy of presentation see file of Minutes).

John Richardson gave a brief overview of the large number of issues and priorities facing the Environment service. Many of the issues facing the Environment service are Treasury driven, such as the landfill allowance trading scheme. If the County Council is unable to reduce waste going to landfill it will face substantial additional costs. There are also mandatory targets for recycling, composting and landfill diversion under the Local Area Agreement.

In relation to planning it was explained that the Regional Spatial Strategy would have a detrimental impact on economic input into County Durham whilst the Planning White Paper was suggesting that local control be weakened.

The Hampton Review on reducing administrative burdens on business had concluded that regulatory bodies (such as trading standards) should advise more and enforce less. This was likely to lead to the weakening of public protection.

In relation climate change it was explained that the UK Government is committed to addressing both the causes and consequences of climate change and to that end is bringing forward proposals for a Climate Change Bill. The Bill will introduce a clear, credible, long-term framework for the UK to achieve its goals of reducing carbon dioxide emissions and ensure steps are taken towards adapting to the impacts of climate change. In terms of energy costs the County Council may have to consider how these can be reduced – street lighting was one obvious area to explore for the opportunity to make energy savings.

Considerable investment will be needed in renewing street lighting columns and it might be necessary to consider PFI to achieve this.

John Richardson explained that the draft Local Transport Bill will have implications for local authorities. The Bill will enable local authorities to improve the quality of local bus services and reform of the existing legislation relating to local road pricing schemes will ensure that, where local authorities wish to develop local schemes, they have the freedom and flexibility to do so.

Tom Bolton advised that any suggestions for future scrutiny projects would be considered by the Co-ordinating Panel.

Resolved:

That the presentation be noted and that it inform the work programme selection process.

A5 Report of the Footways Scrutiny Working Group

The Sub Committee noted the report of the Footways Scrutiny Working Group (for copy see file of Minutes)

A6 Year End Performance 2006/07

The Sub Committee considered a report of the Head of Corporate Policy providing information year end performance for 2006/07 relevant to Looking After the Environment (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Head of Corporate Policy explained that the performance of number of indicators had improved during 2006/07. During 2006/07 the amount of household waste recycled or composted was 29.17%. The target for recycling and composting was 28%. The amount of waste sent to landfill is continuing to decrease and the percentage fell from 73.95% to 70.74%.

The number of bus journeys has increased by 1million though the target has not been reached in 2006/07.

Resolved:

That the report be noted and that further quarterly reports be submitted.