

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in Committee Room 2 - County Hall, Durham on **Friday 13 July 2018 at 9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor E Adam (Chair)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors O Milburn, D Bell, L Brown, J Carr, J Clark, R Crute, S Dunn, D Hicks, P Jopling, C Kay, R Manchester, C Martin, A Patterson, A Simpson, L Taylor and M Wilson

Co-opted Members:

Mr T Bolton and Mrs P Holding

The Chairman welcomed Mr T Bolton who was a returning Co-optee to the committee and Mrs P Holding a new Co-optee to her first meeting. The Chairman advised that Mr D Kinch who had been a Co-optee for nine years would not be returning and the committee thanked Mr Kinch for the work he had done and that a letter of thanks be sent to him on behalf of the Committee.

1 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors B Avery, A Gardner, P Howell and P Sexton.

2 Substitute Members

No notification of Substitute Members had been received.

3 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17 April 2018 were agreed as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

4 Declarations of Interest

There were no Declaration of Interest.

5 Any items from Co-opted Members or interested parties

There were no items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties.

6 Media Relations

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer referred Members to recent press articles relating to the remit of Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The article were:-

- Energy Reduction Project Cuts the Costs of Local Business - P&P windows based in Peterlee, had saved money thanks to the Business Energy Efficiency Project. P&P received a free audit that identified a clear problem with the cost of lighting. Members had previously received information on the BEEP and visited a factory, Dyer Engineering which had benefitted from advice and support provided by the project.
- Counting the Cost of Not Helping with Fly-tipping Enquiries - Two men who failed to comply with an investigation into fly-tipping had been left hundreds of pounds worse off. The men were issued with legal notices compelling them to attend interviews, however neither responded and they were charged with failure to attend. Both men were fined £120 and ordered to pay victim surcharges and costs. This links to the Special meeting of the committee planned for the 10 October, 2018 where Members will consider data in relation to Fly-tipping and various initiatives to tackle the issue.
- Emergency Crews Thanked for Storms Response - Durham County Council teams were on call to help families around the clock during the storms, extra crews including emergency highways action teams, clean and green officers, joiners and heating and gas engineers on alert. In preparation for the forecast storms, all depots were fully stocked with more than 2,400 sand bags. This links to the meeting planned as part of the future work programme, meeting with the Flood Risk Management Authorities for County Durham.

Resolved: That the presentation be noted.

7 County Durham Environment Partnership

The Committee considered the Joint Report of the Director of Transformation and Partnerships and the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Local Services that provided Members with background information on the revision of the Partnership Vision and priorities and looking to work with partners to influence partnership activity and areas of focus (for copy of report, see file of minutes).

The Environment and Design Manager was in attendance to present the report and give a presentation on the County Durham Environment Partnership which provided Members with an overview of what the county has to offer, challenges to be faced including the impact of extreme weather on the county and counting the cost of fly-tipping, what the future holds, it is bright with a countywide partnership approach needed to implement the vision for the county, vision and approach proposed by County Durham Environment

Partnership (plan on a page) identifying four themes and the priorities and measures within the themes, strategy going forward consisting of education/awareness, involvement/participation, partnership and enforcement, examples of various projects for each of the four themes and detail of working with partners (for copy of slides, see file of minutes).

Members were provided with a copy of the County Durham Environment Partnership's plan on a page identifying the Approach and key Areas of Focus including themes, priorities and measures and asked members for their views and comments. The presentation was concluded by the Environment and Design Manager asking for the committee's views/comments in relation to the plan on the page.

The Chairman thanked the Environment and Design Manager for his very informative presentation and commented that in order to achieve the vision of 'A place where people want to live and visit because of the high quality of the natural built environment' then good partnership working is essential. He continued by commenting that the Environment has a huge impact on people's lives.

Councillor Jopling commented that in relation to the theme of 'promote the value, diversity & benefits of Durham's natural environment' and the comment made by the officer of a healthy environment for everyone there are issues in relation to the indiscriminate use by Durham County Council of sprays which are killing healthy plants and there is a need for the appropriate Durham County Council staff to be educated.

The Officer responded that he would raise the issues with the appropriate officers.

Mr Bolton commented that in relation to the theme of 'promote the value, diversity & benefits of Durham's natural environment', County Durham is rich in woodland and heritage and has a beautiful coastline however local people don't take advantage of what the county has to offer. The plan needs to encourage local people to use the many natural attractions available in the county.

The Officer responded that residents were blessed with a great coast but the constraint was the coastal railway line but they were trying to create greater access with new points linked to the new railway station at Horden together with better signage and maps with additional information. He then referred to the East Coast path and their partners Natural England and advised Members that in the next couple of years there will be more profile given to the path encouraging more local people to use the path and take advantage of the coastline. He also indicated that there is a need to push forward cycling.

Councillor Kay referred to sustainable transport and cycle routes in the area and commented that in relation to the theme of 'reduce green house gases and adapt to the impact of climate change' concerning the priority of supporting sustainable travel detailed in the partnership plan, the inner city cycle routes in the county such as the Howlands route, needs a considerable amount of work. He continued that this needs to be addressed. He highlighted that the County Durham Plan makes a vague reference to national cycle routes, however there are a number of routes in the county requiring a high level of work to be undertaken and gave as an example the West Auckland to Barnard Castle route. He concluded by commenting that Durham County Council needs to engage with local cycle clubs to identify their needs/requirements.

The Officer responded that there was a programme to upgrade the disused railway line but the bid was unsuccessful but the route was still there and they needed to push this further up the agenda.

The Chairman referred to the Committee's work programme which included a further update in relation to Cycle Routes in the County and this would provide an opportunity for Councillor Kay to raise these issues with the relevant officer/s. He continued that he thought this item was scheduled for either the next meeting or the November meeting of the committee and that although a lot of work had been undertaken on cycle routes there was still a lot to be done.

Councillor Kay suggested that a group of members from the committee and the relevant officers visit some of the cycle routes in the county.

Councillor Clark referred to the Pyramid in the presentation and commented that a register of information for the whole County that the public could access was needed. Councillor Clark continued by highlighted that in relation to the themes of 'promote the value, diversity & benefits of Durham's natural environment' and 'promote, sustainable, sympathetic development and enhance Durham's heritage assets' and the respective priorities, there is a need for a single point of contact to retain information on the various attractions/assets in the county. This single point of contact would contain information on the various attractions/assets in the county including natural attractions/assets. This information would then be readily available and could be accessed by both local people and visitors to the county. She then referred to a Joint visit by the committee to the Heritage Coast visit which was held before Good Friday and poorly attended.

Councillor Clark continued that She had also noticed when attending events or visiting attractions that there were leaflets on areas in the North East but nothing for County Durham and gave an example of when she had attended Bowes Museum and found that there were no leaflets in relation to County Durham.

The Officer responded that the partnership could bring this together.

The Chairman highlighted that if members of the committee had any further views or comments to send them directly to the Officer.

Resolved: (i) That the report be noted

(ii) That the comments/views made by members of the committee in relation to the plan be forwarded to the appropriate officer for feedback to the County Durham Environment Partnership.

8 Managed Exit: Derwentside Trust for Sport and Arts

The Committee considered the Joint Report of the Director of Transformation and Partnership and the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Local Services that provided Members with background information on the overview of Leisureworks, background to the decision to in-source services, key considerations in relation to in-sourcing, transfer process and future actions (for copy of report, see file of minutes).

The Head of Culture and Sport, Regeneration and Local Services was in attendance to present the report and give a presentation that highlighted the following points:-

- Background to Trust
- In-Sourcing Reasons and the Council's Response
- Strategic Options/Solutions
- Key Financial Implications
- HR Considerations
- Legal Considerations
- Key Risks and Benefits
- Preferred Option
- Implementation
- HR Implementation
- Financial Overview
- Next Steps

The Chairman thanked the Officer for the very detailed summary.

Councillor Patterson recognised that they had inherited this service from Derwentside District Council but sought clarification as to where the £16 million investment had come from and why this funding was purely directed at Consett. She also asked if the operating cost of £893,000 was a cost or deficit.

The Officer responded that Derwentside District Council had already committed £9 million and this money was transferred to the county as part of LGR. Additional investment was added for the building of the academy and the library and became a programme. He also confirmed that the operating figures were a deficit.

Councillor Dunn commented that the project was a success and needed to be recognised.

The Chairman thanked the team responsible for bringing the services operated by the Trust in-house and made reference to the team receiving an award for their work on the project and it was suggested that the committee receive a further report detailing progress at a future meeting of the committee.

Resolved: (i) That the report be noted.

(ii) That the Environment and Sustainable Communities OSC receive a further progress report as part of the 2019/20 work programme.

9 Quarter 4 Performance Management Report

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Management Team which presented progress against the Councils corporate performance framework for the Altogether Greener priority theme for the fourth quarter of the 2017/18 financial year (for copy of report, see file of minutes).

The Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Manager was in attendance to present the report and advised Members that the Committee would be looking at Fly-tipping at a Special meeting in October 2018.

The Chairman referred to plastic cups in the authority which were going to be phased out and informed the committee that the working group had met on a regular basis and a lot of work had already been undertaken by Durham County Council and partners including Northumbrian Water. He also referred to Operation Spruce up which had won an award for 'campaign of the year' at the Keep Britain Tidy's Network Awards. He then commented that he hoped that the figures for fly-tipping would continue to go down.

Councillor Crute sought clarification on the maintenance of unclassified roads and asked why the indicators in relation to A, B, C and unclassified roads are tracker indicators and not target indicators.

The Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Manager responded that there is a scanner survey undertaken that measures the quality of the fabric of the various categories of road and reports back to the authority. It is within the gift of the authority as to which categories of road is prioritised to spend money on.

Councillor Crute referred to pot holes and if there was an accident due to the pot hole who would be liable, he continued that most indicators are trackers in this indicator set, should the indicators in relation to the roads maintenance be trackers or target indicators?

The Chairman commented that a lot of the roads were maintained by the Highway Agency so were not the responsibility of the authority.

The Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Manager continued that as Durham County Council is the Highways Authority, the indicator should be a target and that he would pursue this and respond to the committee.

Councillor Martin continued that in relation to the percentage of unclassified roads where 20% requires maintenance, performance when compared to 12 months earlier is green, should we not try to reduce this % by 1% and therefore the indicator should be amber indicating that we need and aim to improve performance.

Councillor Patterson commented that the 20% is based on an inspection of the unclassified road networks which shows that 20% of the unclassified road network needs maintenance, it is not a set indicator therefore was confused by Councillor Martin's question.

The Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Manager indicated that this would be referred to the Head of Technical Services for clarification.

Mr Bolton referred to fly tipping prosecutions and that recent legislation increased penalties but in a recent media headline the fine was £120 and asked if the Council works with Magistrates to seek the maximum penalties as £120 fine does not send much of a message.

The Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Manager responded that the Council did work with the Magistrates, but it was up to the Magistrate what fine to impose.

Mrs Holding asked whether Durham County Council targets businesses in the county in relation to waste being thrown from vehicles, did we ask businesses to educate their customers that drinks and food should be consumed on site rather than drinking and eating the food whilst travelling with the remains of the drink and food and packaging thrown out of the vehicle.

The Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Manager responded that the Council works with the likes of McDonalds and Costa to publicise to their customers the need to dispose of their waste responsibly however it is ultimately up to the customer to determine how they dispose of any waste.

Councillor Crute referred to waste permits now been easier to obtain as you can now download the permit, which had made a positive impact on fly tipping.

The Chairman advised Members that there was a Special meeting of the committee to look at household waste and advised Members that recently someone had been fined £1000 for fly-tipping.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

10 Refresh of the Work Programme

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Transformation and Partnerships that provided Members with an updated work programme for the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee for 2018-19 for their consideration (for copy of report, see file of minutes).

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer was in attendance to present the report and indicated that this was the second discussion by the committee in relation to the future work programme 2018/19 with the first discussion taking place at the April meeting. The table attached to the report had been developed following that discussion and further discussion with the Chair and Vice-chair.

Several areas included in the 2017/18 work programme had been identified by members for further monitoring including: Environmental campaigns and fly-tipping; fuel poverty projects in the county; winter maintenance; air quality; climate change strategy and delivery plan, carbon management plan and the Heritage coast.

In addition, several additional areas had been highlighted for inclusion during 2017/18 including: future plans for the Gala Theatre to be held at the Gala Theatre, SUPs, heritage assets, cycle routes, highways and bridge maintenance, sustainable heating/energy with Professor John Gluyas and the Stockton and Darlington Bicentennial Celebrations, Household Waste Recycling Centres and Bereavement Services.

In addition to the scheduled 6 meetings of the committee between now and April 2019, a further 5 special meetings would be held focusing on:

- Environment campaigns, Fly-tipping and food waste collection;

- Joint special with Economy and Enterprise OSC on the Stockton and Darlington Bicentennial Celebrations and the Heritage Coast which will take place at Locomotion.
- Flood Risk Management Authorities for County Durham.
- Highways and bridge maintenance and HWRC's in the county – contract.
- Sustainable Heating – Professor Gluyas and the Climate Change Strategy and Delivery Plan and the Carbon Management Plan.

There would also be the systematic review of recommendations contained in the Woodlands management review report and consideration by the committee of the Allotment Management review report.

The following visits had been identified: flood mitigation scheme in the county including SUDs schemes; Thornley Waste Transfer Station and Pity Me HWRC; Heritage Assets possibly Auckland Castle and Stainton Grove recycling centre.

The committee were asked to agree the work programme and identify a future area for focused work following the completion of the Allotment Services Review which should be concluded in January.

Councillor Martin raised concerns on the number of additional meetings.

Councillor Crute commented that the work programme should be progressed as proposed.

Following discussions on the number of additional meetings, Members agreed the work programme as set out in the report.

Resolved: (i) That the work programme as set out be agreed.

(ii) That a topic for a focused scrutiny review be determined at a later date following the completion of the current review.

11 Minutes from the County Durham Environment Partnership Board held on 7 March 2018

The Minutes of the meeting of the County Durham Environment Partnership Board held 7 March 2017 were received by the Committee for information.

12 Minutes from the Northumbria Regional Flood and Coastal Committee held on 19 January 2018

The Minutes of the meeting of the Northumbria Regional Flood and Coastal Committee held on 19 January 2018 were received by the Committee for information.

13 Minutes from the Durham Strategic Flood Prevention Group held on the 9 May 2018

The Minutes of the meeting of the Durham Strategic Flood Prevention Group held on 9 May 2018 were received by the Committee for information.