

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Special Meeting of **Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in Committee Room 2 - County Hall, Durham on **Wednesday 10 October 2018 at 9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor E Adam (Chair)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors O Milburn, B Avery, L Brown, J Clark, S Dunn, P Howell, P Jopling, C Kay, R Manchester and A Simpson

Co-opted Member:

Mrs P Holding

1 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Bell, J Carr, D Hicks, C Martin and L Taylor.

2 Substitute Members

No notification of Substitute Members had been received.

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

4 Any items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties

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

5 Environment Improvement and Fly-tipping Campaigns - Progress:

Members considered the report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Local Services that provided Members with a progress report on the development and implementation of environmental improvement campaigns and projects in the county (for copy of report, see file of minutes).

The Neighbourhood Protection Manager and Senior Civic Pride Officer were in attendance to present the report and provided Members with a presentation that provided details of:-

- The 'Durham Pride' Approach and changing attitudes and behaviours
- Partnership Working
- Environmental Quality Indicator
- Fly-tipping – A National Perspective; Operation Stop It
- Partnership Task Force
- How are we performing now?
- Mapping & PowerB1
- Enforcement Activity
- Waste of Private Property
- Volumes and Outcomes
- Responsible Dog Ownership; Stray Dogs; Dog PSPO – 1st June 2017
- Big Spring Clean Aims and the Big Spring Clean 2018
- Operation Spruce Up; Surveys in each area; Success – media
- Enforcement
- Open Space Improvements
- It's Your Neighbourhood
- Volunteers
- Green Flag
- Learning New Skills
- Learning about the Environment
- Celebrating our Environment
- What can Members do?

During the presentation Members asked questions and made observations as follows:-

Fly-tipping

Councillor Clark asked whether DCC kept figures in relation to the number of fly-tipping incidents reported by staff and the number reported by members of the public. She continued that education was included in the activity via Operation Spruce Up undertaken in Horden wondered whether following Operation Spruce Up there had been a spike at any point in the reporting of incidents from members of the public. She then referred to staff reporting incidents in particular refuse wagons as they have the necessary technology fitted and can see into yards to record and then report incidents of fly-tipping. In addition, she asked as to how easy it is for other DCC staff working in local communities to report incidents and whether these staff have the time and necessary technology to report incidents easily.

The Neighbourhood Protection Manager responded that the figures in the presentation in relation to fly-tipping included incidents reported by DCC staff. He continued that a number of staff were reporting incidents in particular the clean and green teams which work in our local communities. The Neighbourhood Wardens also report incidents in local communities, not just fly-tipping incidents they also report street lighting issues, pot holes etc. through the CRM system with the system used to identify hotspots in the county. He confirmed that it is currently relatively easy for staff to report incidents and that DCC is in the process of using Microsoft power BI which identifies three or more incidents at a post code area providing a richer picture for use by DCC, partners and members.

The Chairman asked in relation to it being relatively easy for staff to report incidents, is it easy because they have the necessary technology to do so. The Neighbourhood Protection Manager indicated that one Neighbourhood Warden had reported 900 incidents over and above his job. He continued that Wardens have tablets and can report on the dash system and thereby have the facility to report incidents while out in the field however not all DCC staff working in local communities have this technology.

The Chairman then referred to the waste transfer stations which can be used by businesses to dispose of business waste and asked if they are open on a weekend and if not could this be looked at. In addition, what advertising/promotion has been carried out by the service to highlight the facilities/systems on offer at the transfer stations.

The Neighbourhood Protection Manager advised that the advertising for this facility had been low key as the Service Grouping wanted to ensure that all systems were in place however they would shortly be carrying out some promotional activity. He advised Members that he would feed back to the service the member's suggestion in relation to the opening of the facility on a weekend.

Councillor Jopling referred to retail centres in the county where there are fast food outlets and how she had noticed the amount of rubbish from these outlets appearing at the side of the road, which has obviously been thrown out of vehicles once the meal and refreshments have been consumed. She asked if the Council liaises with shopping centre managers to see if they could coerce big fast food outlets to put something on the packaging encouraging the responsible disposal of the packaging.

The Neighbourhood Protection Manager advised that DCC has done a litter from vehicle campaign and in addition has worked with companies such as McDonalds who are very supportive of any initiatives undertaken by DCC and have previously assisted DCC staff in carrying out litter picks. They have also allowed DCC to issue FPN on their sites and get involved in the Big Spring Clean.

Councillor Avery indicated that all members have problems with fly-tipping in their areas and that he had reported a lot of fly-tipping incidents. He continued that the CAT team had undertaken a lot of work in his area and had done a fantastic job however there are a lot of terraced houses in his area which are attractive to transient families which results in rubbish being left in vacant yards and in the street, drifting back to the situation before the CAT team came into the community. He continued that to the Town Council is considering the use of a private company to tidy up the area however he was not in favour of this approach and would prefer additional DCC Neighbourhood Wardens in the local community.

The Chairman indicated that at a previous meeting of the committee the question had been raised asking how long after the CAT team had been in an area, did it take, for the area to get back to the previous condition.

The Neighbourhood Protection Manager indicated that the feedback from Spruce Up and surveys has been positive with more beach clean ups than ever before as communities respond to TV programmes such as the Blue Planet. The Service works closely with Town and Parish Councils with some parish councils providing funding for additional Neighbourhood Warden hours in their local area. There is a CPN team that work outside of

the CAT Team that does additional work in specific locations in the county where there is a high turnover of residents with a mix of issues. With regard to how long it takes for areas to change after the CAT team had visited he could not answer, however work undertaken by the CAT team such as the painting of street furniture and working with schools who do planting lasts longer. He highlighted that we need to focus on education as well as enforcement.

Councillor Howell referred to the map and figures contained in the presentation in relation to Detritus and commented that the data was only useful if it was used to look at targets. The Neighbourhood Protection Manager assured Members that the Service Grouping does use the data for targeting purposes.

Councillor Howell then referred to enforcement activity which showed that prosecutions were up however Stop and Checks and the deployment of CCTV was down and asked why both Stop and Checks and deployment was down.

The Neighbourhood Protection Manager responded that they had a lot of CCTV cameras currently deployed but they needed to do more Stop and Checks and that they were currently training rural Special Constables in order to increase the amount of Stop and Checks.

Mrs Holding commented that where she lives there are issues with litter from fast food outlets and referred to some parts of the country offering youngsters free coffee if they return their cups and asked if this could be encouraged in County Durham.

The Neighbourhood Protection Manager indicated that the authority had signed up to the National Refill Campaign and that bottles could be refilled at council buildings. Starbucks also did a discount if you took your own cup and other groups were looking at tackling issues with a move towards refillable cups/bottles etc. There was a lot of pressure on manufacturers, so a lot of research was being carried out.

Councillor Brown asked what work was being undertaken in class rooms on 'Keep Britain Tidy'. Officers responded that 'Tidy Ted' goes into classrooms and that this would be covered in detail later in the presentation. The Senior Civic Pride Officer commented that the Clean and Tidy Campaign was a national scheme however the authority had won awards for both the 'Operation Stop It' and 'Operation Spruce Up' campaigns.

Councillor Dunn referred to the DCC literature/leaflets available and suggested that we develop some clip art for use by Town and Parish Councils in their newsletters and social media. He then referred to the deployment of CCTV cameras which was 110 in 2017/18 and 33 to date in 2018/19 with 8,000 fly-tipping incidents a year. This was the ultimate action to catch repeat offenders but from experience it was difficult to get CCTV cameras deployed where there were regular problems. He commented that DCC's cameras were using older technology and were more labour intensive in the monitoring and suggested that the council look at investing in more up to date technology which would be less labour intensive.

The Neighbourhood Protection Manager advised that in terms of technology, DCC keeps an eye on new products and recently had a demonstration from a company showing more up to date technology however new equipment had to be financed.

The Chairman commented that County Council members may be willing to contribute to funding the purchase of more current camera technology.

Councillor Kay asked whether vehicles carrying green waste are stopped and checked as this type of waste is often dumped illegally.

The Neighbourhood Protection Manager advised that police have the powers to stop vans/lorries carrying all types of waste including green garden waste, they have powers of seizure which has a big impact.

The Chairman referred to the comments made in relation to the partnership taskforce however there was no mention of social landlords. Officers responded that they worked with a lot of landlords including Livin and the County Durham Housing Group on various projects including litter picks. Officers commented that the Clean and Green team receive a number of calls from residents reporting rubbish on social landlords land but as the rubbish is not on land in council ownership they were unable to take action.

The Chairman indicated that the Livin policy was 40 days for the removal of fly-tipping from their land and that this causes issues as residents think that DCC is responsible for the removal of the rubbish. He continued that Livin had reduced this period to 15 days however this has recently increased back to 40 days and he advised Members that he would raise this issue with Livin.

Responsible Dog Ownership

Councillor Kay referred to dog walking routes and asked whether there are enough bins for residents to use to dispose of dog poo. He continued that the route he walks, he can walk for over a mile before he finds a bin which is often full or overflowing with bags of dog poo. This resulted in people leaving the poo bags on the ground or hanging in the trees in biodegradable bags. He asked whether DCC had ever looked at where residents walk their dogs to then position bins where they are most needed providing an opportunity for residents to dispose of their dog's poo responsibly.

The Neighbourhood Protection Manager advised that the location of the bins was mapped on the GIS system however if they installed a bin at one mile then they would need to place a bin at two miles and so on. Maybe there is a need to change the approach to a stick and flick approach (Forestry Commissions option) on railway lines and countryside walks, flicking the poo into the undergrowth.

The Senior Civic Pride Officer indicated that the Service Grouping get a lot of requests for dog poo bins, the difficulty is often the location of the bins and getting them emptied as dog poo is very heavy and the bins are located so distance from an access point. The Clean and Green team have a responsibility to report that bins are overflowing, if a bin is overflowing then it should be reported so that the rota could be altered so that the bin is emptied more frequently.

Councillor Avery continued that he agreed that DCC needs to look at where the bins are located and he continued by highlighting that he has particular issues in his local area, suggesting that more bins are required.

Councillor Jopling agreed that there needed to be a review of the location of dog bins as people tend to walk the same route. She indicated that people don't like to place the poo in a litter bin, they prefer a dog bin.

Councillor Brown indicated that dog poo bags should be biodegradable so that the bag and the waste rotted together.

Councillor Dunn referred to the designation of play areas as dog free zones and commented that in his local area residents wanted to make a football field as a dog free zone, as they have to clear the area of poo prior to an football activity taking place. He asked if this type of area was fenced off could it be designated as a dog free zones.

The Neighbourhood Protection Manager responded that they needed to go out to consultation to expand the PSPO and advised that in relation to some beaches in the county they had failed in being designated as dog free zones as a number of people wanted to be able to walk their dogs on the beach.

Litter

Councillor Milburn referred to DCC's litter poster which was too polite and showed Members a litter poster from Falkirk saying 'Show A Litter Respect' take your litter with you, it's not your personal bin. Members asked that the Officer report back to the Service Grouping that the message needs to be more blunt and direct.

Enforcement

Councillor Dunn referred to dash cams which were potentially a good source of evidence, even if used as a deterrent.

Officers advised Members that some council vehicles already had dash cams fitted and were used as evidence. Dash cams were going to be rolled out to more council vehicles.

Councillor Jopling asked what happened to the litter from a clean up operation.

The Senior Civic Pride Officer advised that they were currently working with the Clean and Green team to have a split bag so there was one side for plastic and one for litter allowing the waste to be separated.

In response to questions on the use of footage from dash cams owned by members of the public to record people throwing litter from vehicles the Neighbourhood Protection Manager advised that the authority is currently looking at the legal implications of asking the public to send in dash cam footage. He advised that as enforcement was now on the registered keeper of the vehicle instead of the person committing the offence, this is an important change for his team.

The Chairman thanked the Officers for their very informative presentation and indicated that the presentation showed that the service was doing a lot of good work, which was recognised by other authorities and asked that the officers in attendance pass on the thanks of members to all the various teams involved.

Resolved: That the Committee note and comment on the wide range of environmental campaigns aimed at promoting behavioural change and greater community involvement in their local environment.