

## **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 **Friday 8 February 2019 at 9.30 am**

### **Present:**

**Councillor E Adam (Chair)**

### **Members of the Committee:**

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

### **Co-opted Members:**

Mr T Bolton and Mrs P Holding

### **1 Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Bell and A Simpson.

### **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 Flood Risk Management Authorities for County Durham**

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Transformation and Partnerships that provided background information on the role and responsibilities of the Environment and Sustainable Communities OSC as the Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Committee for County Durham prior to receiving a presentation on the water management policies within the emerging County Durham Plan and presentations from the Flood Risk Management Authorities for County Durham (for copy of report and slides of presentations, see file of minutes).

## County Durham Plan – Water Management Policies

The Committee received a presentation from the Senior Policy Officer, Regeneration and Local Services that highlighted the following points:-

- County Durham Plan Timetable
- Preferred Options Consultation Summary
- Water Management Policy Changes
- Water Infrastructure
- Evidence Bases
- Consultation

The Senior Policy Officer informed the committee that 33 comments had been received in relation to the two water policies in the emerging plan. Most of the comments were supportive. Some comments related to site specific flooding issues and these were passed to the Drainage and Coastal Protection Team as they were not specifically looking to change the policy wording. One respondent was concerned about climate change and rising water levels which is picked up through more general changes as a result of an increased emphasis on climate change in the NPPF. There was some concern from developers about what we were asking them to deliver, what was considered reasonable, Developers are encouraged to explore how SuDs within a scheme can achieve reductions to wider catchment flood risk issues, where possible however this is consistent with National Policy and Planning Practice Guidance.

The new NPPF was published in July 2018 placing a greater emphasis on climate change and the management of flood risk, these changes have been picked up in the revised policies.

In relation to the main changes in the Water Management Policy they relate to making it clearer that proposals must consider flood risk and protect the quantity and quality of surface and groundwater bodies as well as seeking opportunities to improve water quality.

There are also proposed changes around who can adopt SuDS with the opportunity for water and sewerage companies to adopt SuDs in the future.

In relation to the evidence bases it was confirmed that the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) and the Water Cycle Study (WCS) were done for the Preferred Options stage of the emerging plan and did not require further updates as the baseline information remained the same. The sequential test has been updated to reflect the changes that have been made to the allocations within the plan and in response to comments from the Environment Agency.

Councillor Dunn indicated that he was supportive of policy 36. He continued that he represents Bowburn which has grown significantly and has had a number settlements added. However, the community has an old drainage system that is not fit for purpose and as a result flooding has occurred at the community centre. He referred to new housing developments having a lot of hard standing and not many trees resulting in more surface water and asked if when considering proposals for the emerging plan, had rain water capture been considered. He suggested that rain water capture should be considered as an option.

The Senior Policy Officer responded that DCC considers a range of options on schemes including the use of SuDs schemes which can include rain water capture. The policy does not prevent the installation of rain tanks it is down to the design of the development rather than policies.

## **Environment Agency**

The Committee received a presentation from the Team Leader Partnerships and Strategic Overview, Durham and Tees Valley Environment Agency that highlighted the following points:-

- The six year Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management North East Area
- Update on Allocations 2019-2021
- Progress with EA Flood Alleviation Schemes in 2017/18
- Investment Pipeline Development
- Asset Maintenance
- The Future
  - New FCERM Strategy
  - Demonstrating New Ways of Working
  - Contribution to Economic Regeneration/Growth
  - Integrated Management of Flood Risk
  - Preparing for the next Investment Period
  - Brexit Impacts

The Chairman thanked the Team Leader for his presentation and asked if there were any plans to mitigate coastal flood risk.

The Team Leader advised Members that there were no schemes in County Durham but there were a number of schemes in the North East included in the six-year Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Investment Programme.

Councillor Jopling asked if climate change was taken into consideration with schemes going forward.

The Team Leader advised that they do look at the potential impact of climate change and incorporated this into the business case when developing a scheme. He continued that they ensured that protection was provided throughout the life of the scheme including a margin of error. He also commented that the government had recently updated the climate change predictions which now has a further slight marginal increase for the impact of climate change and this should start being incorporated into future schemes.

Councillor Dunn referred to sea levels rising and asked what areas of the Durham coast would be a risk of coastal erosion in the future.

The Team Leader responded that they carried out mapping of the coast identifying areas at risk of coastal erosion and agreed to provide Councillor Dunn with the information.

The Drainage and Coastal Protection Manager responded that County Durham generally has a high coastline. Crimdon Dene is the only area at risk of flooding from coastal erosion

due to the sea level rising. Some works had been carried out on Seaham north pier to defend the harbour. There was no active intervention for the South pier as there was a big buffer area and no developments or settlements that would be affected so coastal erosion was allowed to occur.

Councillor Patterson commented that there were some impressive schemes and asked if there were any schemes which focused on rivers and the amount of water they can take.

The Team Leader indicated that they did monitor gravel build up in rivers, however they have to be careful and considerate when removing gravel as it has an environmental impact. Funding from the Coal Authority is allowing them to look to deliver some schemes in the upper catchment to reduce the sediment entering rivers from mine workings. He continued that natural flood management looked at reducing sediment into rivers and that the natural flood management work in Upper Weardale will help to reduce the sediment from fields going into rivers.

Mr Bolton referred to coastal erosion issues and that communities seemed reasonably well protected. He continued that the railway line viability had been previously raised and asked whether the railway line was in danger from coastal erosion as at some points it is close to the cliff edge.

The Drainage and Coastal Protection Manager responded that the railway line was part of the Seashore Management process and that currently there was very little risk to the line.

### **Drainage and Coastal Team Update**

The Committee received a presentation from the Head of Technical Services and the Drainage and Coastal Protection Manager that highlighted the following points:-

- Review for 2018/19
- Grant Funded Schemes for 2017/18
- Schemes Going forward
- Medium Term Investment Plan 2018-2027
- Working Groups
- Schemes – Lanchester and Chester-le-Street
- Joint Studies with Northumbrian Water
- Flooding Examples

Councillor Patterson referred to the slide stating that 3 kms of highway ditches had been cleansed and commented that the contents removed from the ditches is left on the bankside and when it rains the contents are washed back into the ditch or in some cases cover the ditch. This has resulted in people assuming that they are parking on the verge when they are actually parking in a ditch. She asked what was the criteria to be followed in relation to the disposal of the waste collected from ditches.

The Head of Technical Services responded that there was a budget of £25,000 per annum for preventative inspections and maintenance and that the service has to be reactive and target those areas at highest risk. When cleansing ditches it is accepted practise that the contents would be left at the side, to ensure that it does not fall back into the ditch. He continued that the contents from the ditches are rich in nutrients and environmentally

sustainable however the waste from ditches is classed as active waste and incurs high disposal costs. It was confirmed that the waste removed should be spread flat on the bankside.

The Head of Technical Services indicated that they would make sure the contents removed are spread out flat in the future.

Councillor Jopling commented that the contents of potholes when washed away in heavy rainfall must go into the drainage system.

The Head of Technical Services responded that where possible they carried out a permanent repair and avoided temporary measures that did not last so this should not be an issue.

The Chairman referred to the tremendous work being undertaken by the Risk Management Authorities working in partnership and that flood prevention was an expensive process however the devastation it causes to families and communities is huge. He highlighted that EU funding was a major funding source and had resulted in many of the schemes being delivered in the county.

### **Northumbrian Water**

The Committee received a presentation from the Sustainable Sewerage Manager that highlighted the following points:-

- Interactive portal – [www.nwlcommunityportal.co.uk](http://www.nwlcommunityportal.co.uk)
- Update on Completed Sewer Network Schemes within County Durham
- Update on Current Sewer Network Schemes within County Durham
- Update on Planned Sewer Network Schemes within County Durham
- Sewage Treatment Works Investment
- Rainwise Projects in County Durham
- Joint Working
- Strategic Area Studies
- Joint Working
- Adoption of SuDS – Update
- Engagement with Landowners

Councillor Kay sought clarification on what was 'rainwise'. The Sustainable Sewerage Manager explained that the project looks at reducing surface water from rain by using a number of interventions. It looks at current issues but is also pro-active identifying interventions to build resilience to those properties that may be at risk of flooding in the future. The Sustainable Sewerage Manager then gave Members details of the strategy and advised of the 'rainwise' website.

Following the presentations, the Chairman commented that the committee appreciated the work being undertaken in the county to mitigate flood risk. He advised Members that there was going to be a site visit on 4 April 2019 to look at various flood mitigation schemes in the county.

**Resolved:** (i) That the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee in its role as the Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Committee for County Durham note the information contained in the report and presentations.

(ii) That the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee in its role as the Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Committee for County Durham receives further presentations from the Risk Management Authorities at a future special meeting of the committee arranged for February 2020.