

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham on **Wednesday 8 January 2020 at 9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor E Adam (Chair)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors O Milburn, A Batey, D Bell, L Brown, B Coult, R Crute, S Dunn, J Higgins, R Manchester, I McLean, P Sexton, M Wilson and M Wilkes

Co-opted Members:

Mr T Bolton and Mrs P Holding

Also Present:

Councillors J Clare, S Iveson, J Maitland, T Tucker and Mrs R Morris

1 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors K Hawley and A Simpson.

2 Substitute Members

Councillor M Wilkes substituted for Councillor A Simpson.

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 Management of Durham County Council's Fleet

The Committee considered the joint report of the Corporate Director of Resources and the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Local Services that provided members with an overview of how Durham County Council's fleet was managed

including details of work being undertaken to reduce emissions by Durham County Council's fleet to help achieve the Council's targets as stated in Durham County Council's Climate Change Emergency Declaration (for copy of report, see file of minutes).

Members were provided with a presentation that highlighted the following points:

- Fleet profile
- Sites where fleet is located
- Current fleet management arrangements
- Why fleet was managed in this way
- Plans to change how the fleet was managed in the future and any challenges
- Work undertaken to reduce emission from the fleet and contribution to 60% reduction by 2030
- Future plans and steps

Following the presentation, the Chairman thanked the officer and invited questions from members.

Councillor McLean asked if the procurement process considered CO₂ emissions created by the manufacture and transportation of vehicles as part of the purchasing procedure. He continued that if vehicles were purchased in the UK this could produce a carbon footprint saving and contribute to employment.

Mr M Toas, County Fleet Manager responded that it was a valid point that he would raise with procurement but very few of the specialised vehicles and associated equipment are solely produced in the UK.

Mr S McDonald, Principal Officer: Climate Change and Sustainability advised members that CO₂ emissions from manufacturing were calculated and accounted for in the country of manufacture however in relation to CO₂ emissions from transporting vehicles, this was a grey area. Procurement were looking at how the procurement process can be more sustainable in the future.

Councillor Tucker referred to leased arrangements with vehicles and asked if the authority had maintenance agreements for these vehicles.

The Officer responded that currently no maintenance agreements were in place, vehicles are maintained at Durham County Council workshops, any maintenance agreements would be with the dealer and not the council workshop, this could impact on a timely return of the vehicle into service. In relation to operator licenced vehicles the authority has a legal requirement to ensure the vehicles are maintained to the Authorities Operator Licence requirements.

Councillor Tucker referred to pool cars and asked if there was a saving in relation to the cost of the car pool when compared to the cost of personal mileage claims.

The Officer responded that the car pool scheme was introduced for a number of reasons, including that it cost less than personal car mileage rate (5p under personal car mileage rate) rate but one of the main drivers for the scheme was employees not wanting to use their own vehicles for council business for security reasons.

In response to a question from Councillor Brown asking for clarification on the role of the ULEV working group, officers advised that consideration of the Council's fleet and how to reduce its carbon emissions in the future was just a small element of the work of the ULEV working group. It was confirmed that the group was headed up by Adrian White, Head of Transport and Contract Services.

Councillor Brown asked on behalf of Councillor Coult what were the timescales for switching over as many vehicles as possible in the fleet to electric and did they intend to purchase more gully cleaning vehicles.

The Officer responded that the timescale was 5 years and that Durham County Council gully cleaning vehicles are on a 5 year replacement plan. There is currently no additional gully cleaning vehicles included in the replacement plan, any additional requirements for gully cleaning vehicles would be at the request of Technical Services and advised that the service sometimes hired in these vehicles during peak times.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer advised Members that detail on the role and activities of the ULEV work stream had been presented to the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee in September and Members of Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee were invited to attend this meeting.

On the 27 February 2020 a report and presentation on regional and local transport, which would include detail of activity undertaken by the ULEV working group would be presented to Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee, members of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be invited to attend this meeting.

The officer responded that members may want to visit the biogas facility at Newton Aycliffe as the authority was also looking at vehicles powered by alternative fuels.

Councillor Sexton referred to the replacing of machinery that was currently working for electric alternatives to be greener. He asked whether the authority by replacing items that did not need replacing was causing an impact on carbon emissions and was the resulting increase in electricity accounted for in these calculations.

The Officer responded that machinery was replaced when it was scheduled to be renewed. He also commented that battery operated machinery was not producing

fumes, fuel was not transported and the vibration was a lot lower so there was also health and safety benefits.

Councillor Sexton responded that we needed to justify these changes, and needed to be able to show carbon emissions from electricity usage with all this technology and compare to previous emissions, hopefully it would be negative.

Mr McDonald confirmed that carbon renewables usage was at the highest level ever and indicated that on some days there were zero carbon energy depending on the wind. He continued that the difference between diesel/petrol versus electricity was significant and a lot more carbon friendly.

Councillor Adam commented that electricity was a key feature in reducing carbon emissions however the charging infrastructure had to be in place to handle the increased demand.

Councillor Dunn thanked officers for the work and research they had undertaken and continued that the report demonstrated that Durham County Council and County Durham were not fully in control to reduce carbon emissions from vehicles as there was a lack of investment from government that had resulted on dependency of commercial organisations to develop the necessary technology for vehicles so that they were available for purchase at a competitive cost. The targets to be achieved by 2021 would give a potential carbon reduction of 53 tonnes out of 10,000 tonnes produced on vehicle admissions. Half of the vehicles and vans were to be replaced over a 5 year period, needed to be setting targets to replace vehicles more quickly with an example of at least 100 vehicles to be replaced this year. The replacement of 26 pool vehicles was a good start but much more was needed to be done this year and next year. He stated that if the introduction of charging points at employees' homes where Durham County Council vehicles were parked was key to reducing carbon emissions then this needed expediting as a matter of urgency. In addition, 52 weeks to procure vehicles was too long and asked that in year 1 and year 2, much more progress needed to be made.

The Officer responded that it was a massive challenge and that the biggest fuel users were HGV vehicles, however the vehicles needed to be available with the necessary technology at a competitive price. He continued that an evaluation of the depots needs to be undertaken to ensure that the charging infrastructure was in place to meet growing demand, so infrastructure was the key.

Councillor Dunn responded that this needed to be done extremely quickly.

The Chair indicated that progress was being made but however there was need for greater government support and funding in terms of the development of the technology and infrastructure.

Councillor Wilkes referred to the replacing of 26 vehicles out of 1017 vehicles and commented that more vehicles need to be replaced. He then commented that members needed sight of the figures to replace say 50 vehicles, 100 vehicles and so on together with the cost of installing charging points. He continued by asking what else Durham County Council's procurement was doing to put pressure on manufacturers to develop the technology quicker.

The Chair responded that these were areas being looked at by the ULEV working Group and that the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee did not have that detail, but a report would be submitted to a future meeting of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Mr Bolton referred to the development of vehicles and commented that a great deal of development had been made with small vehicles. He referred to the ULEV working group and asked if the authority were working with regional partners looking at procurement from a regional perspective and taking advantage of economies of scale.

The Officer responded that vehicles were procured with TPPL through NEPO which was a national procurement framework, so economies of scale were captured. There was however a huge difference in the cost of electric vehicles. They would look to procure the electric vehicles for 8 years as opposed to 5 years but at the moment the battery life deteriorated over the years with vehicles at 7 years having only 70% battery life. Mercedes were 2 years away from delivering a fully electric HGV vehicle with HGV electric RCV's vehicles currently costing in the region of £450,000. Whole life costs would have to be reviewed to establish the number of years with which the EV vehicles would be operated over.

Mrs Morris referred to the 60% carbon reduction target and commented that it may be helpful to publish some information on the various stages and activities identified by Durham County Council to tackle carbon emissions by the fleet, to get local communities involved.

The Officer responded that the 60% target was a Durham County Council target and not solely fleet. They had already delivered 2 roadshows providing an opportunity to view ULEV's and the idea was that more roadshows would be held in the future.

The Chair advised that the Climate Emergency Response Plan would be presented to this committee on the 16 March 2020, this plan would include detail of the measures proposed to meet the 60% reduction in carbon emissions.

The Chair then asked Members if they wished to visit the Biogas Plant in Newton Aycliffe in the near future.

Resolved: (i) That the report be noted.

(ii) That arrangements be made for the Committee to visit the Biogas Plant in Newton Aycliffe as part of the future work programme via an electric bus if possible.

6 Air Quality Management in County Durham

The Committee considered the joint report of the Corporate Director of Resources and the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Local Services that provided Members with background information on the progress made on the Durham City air quality action plan measures, the air quality elsewhere across the County and traffic improvement in Durham City (for copy of reports, see file of minutes).

Ms D Holman (Pollution Control Manager), Mr D Gribben (Senior Air Quality Officer) and Mr D Wafer (Strategic Traffic Manager) were in attendance to deliver a presentation that highlighted the following points:

- Update on air quality in Chester-le-Street and Durham City over the previous 12 months.
- Monitoring in Chester-le-Street
- Monitoring in Durham City
- Progress on the implementation of the Air Quality Action Measures
- A review of the Durham City Air Quality Action Plan
- Tasks to be completed during the next 12 months
- Traffic volumes on Leazes Road, Sep to Nov 2019
- Before and after photographs of Leazes Bowl Roundabout and Gilesgate Roundabout
- Urban Traffic Management and Control Information
- Transforming Cities Fund – Durham City Proposals

Following the presentation, the Chair thanked officers for a very informative presentation and asked members for their questions.

Councillor Brown referred to the air quality action plan and commented that it did not seem to be making progress and highlighted that she had a number of questions from residents that she would e-mail direct to the officer following the meeting. She then asked when SCOOT had been implemented as she was under the impression it had not yet been switched on.

Mr D Wafer responded that the SCOOT system had been there from day one and was implemented when traffic issues are out of the ordinary, He continued that there had been an ongoing comms issue with the SCOOT system, but that had been resolved and the system had been stable for the last couple of months.

Councillor Wilkes commented that a plan had first been asked for in 2009, the air quality management area declared in 2011 with the plan taking 5 years to be put in place. The pollution area had been extended in 2014 and now it had been further extended again to include Church Street where a lot of young people lived and there

was also a school. The failure to address air quality had been a failing of the unitary authority who had failed to act quickly enough to tackle this issue. The implementation of the plan had been delayed due to funding; pollution was a problem that was killing people across the country. An urgent education campaign was required and more funding needed to address this issue. Residents were calling for no car days and one should be held this Spring and every month going forward. This Council removed electric buses from the cathedral route, electric buses were needed on the park and ride routes. He referred to action measure 6 and commented that the biggest employers in the city did not have travel plans and suggested that these companies needed to be listed on the council's website with questions asked about their travel plans. He then asked how many employees in Durham County Council knew what was contained in Durham County Council's travel plan and continued that 1000 cars are parked at County Hall with no parking charges for employees or members however nurses and NHS staff were paying to park at the Hospital and that the council's solution was to have the council headquarters in the city centre which was going to cause further problems.

In response, the Chair indicated that there was an air quality action plan in place, so progress had been made. SCOOT was also in place but the impact of a reduction in funding had made it difficult to fund measures to reduce carbon emissions, but things were improving.

Mr Wafer referred to the monitoring of sites that were exceeding the annual mean national air quality objective and commented that most areas were below the threshold. He then referred to Church Street and confirmed that it was the pinch point that was being monitored and not the area where the school was located. There was a canyon effect on that road but the air quality in the city was generally improving but still had hot spots.

Ms Holman indicated that they had to update DEFRA every year on progress, so Durham County Council was scrutinised by DEFRA. The air quality action plan was being reviewed as part of the refresh of the plan. It was unfair to say nothing had been done however funding issues had hampered progress.

Councillor Wilkes asked for the current annual means concentrations for Highgate.

Officers responded that Highgate was now below $40 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ and that the area was still included in the air quality management area.

Councillor Wilkes responded that Highgate had been over the $40 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ annual mean air quality objective during previous years.

Ms Holman responded that the strategy was in draft, but there was an approval process to go through before implementation.

Councillor Sexton referred to the revoking of the Air Quality Management Area at Menceforth Cottages and commented that he believed that the junction was contributing to the levels and asked if the monitoring devices would remain in place following revocation.

Ms Holman responded that the monitoring devices would be kept in place for 12 months.

Councillor Sexton indicated that the initiatives had worked and asked if they had any other initiatives such as filters on vehicles and at bus stops.

Mr Wafer responded that Durham County Council was looking at options to increase the green infrastructure using plants, trees etc., but more work needed to be done including identifying physical space to put them.

Councillor Dunn indicated that the issue was too many people trying to get through the city centre. It was not true to say that nothing had been done as improvements had been made, it was just unfortunate that more and more vehicles wanted and needed to get through the city centre. The solution to these issues was the proposed relief roads taking vehicles around the city together with a move towards a 4 day working week and home working.

Mrs Holding indicated that the report concentrated on Durham City Centre and Chester-le-Street and asked about other villages in the County.

Officers responded that these were the declared areas, but they did receive requests to look at other areas in the county, but no other areas had been identified as requiring a management area, but network monitoring did extend to other areas.

Mrs Holding then asked about cyclists being encouraged to use these busy routes and was concerned about the possible impact of pollution on cyclists using these routes.

Mr Wafer referred to some recent research that found that you got more pollution sitting in the car than you did from cycling along the road.

Councillor Batey referred to Menceforth Cottages, Chester-le-Street and commented that she was concerned about the revocation and asked if consideration had been given to the new housing development at Pelton Fell as this could potentially have an impact with more vehicles passing by Menceforth Cottages and asked that the monitoring equipment be kept in place.

Mr Spencer, a member of the public commented that change towards electric vehicles was small and there was no clear definition of the goal that Government were trying to achieve. Defra accepted a 10% reduction in emissions however there was no clear indication that this was going to be achieved in the near future. The

SCOOT system had been given the maximum score for its ability to reduce pollution in Durham City, an equivalent score was given to limiting and stopping diesel vehicles from going through the City but this was totally rejected in favour of the SCOOT scheme with no evidence given for reason for rejection of this option. If the SCOOT system had been shown to have failed in its goal to reduce pollution as it had not increased the speed of traffic flow to reduce pollution, if that major factor in the pollution plan had failed was there any consideration being given at the moment to consider some form of reduction of diesel vehicle use in the city, not just voluntary but imposed as had been done in other cities.

The Chair indicated that York were looking into proposals to ban cars in the City Centre. Newcastle had gone through a consultation proposing a Clean Air Charge on diesel vehicles.

Mr Wafer indicated that air pollution was not the only reason for the introduction of the SCOOT system. Some authorities were pushed by central government such as Newcastle to do more measures like the introduction of charges because the government were forecasting that they would not be able to meet air pollution targets however DEFRA was not saying this in relation to Durham, we are not in the same category as Newcastle as having such major pollution issues by way of a comparison. He highlighted that Durham County Council's fleet was taking measures to reduce its carbon emissions and he continued that not everyone was going to have an electric car tomorrow however when you buy a car currently the engine size would be smaller than in the past.

Mr Spencer asked the timescales for Durham City.

Ms Holman responded that the plan would be updated by 2021 that would refresh the plan and introduce any new control measures necessary. Monitoring results at Menceforth Cottages were below $40 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ but were hovering at 35/36 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$. DEFRA's advice was if the Council could show that levels are 10% below $40 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ for over 3 years then the plan could be revoked if not then the Council would have had to introduce an air quality action plan. They were looking to refresh, update and amend the air quality action plan for the Durham city and were hoping to have some steer from the local plan.

In response to Mr Spencer, Mr Wafer referred to the measures being introduced to combat both congestion by getting people to travel by alternative means which was an ongoing process. The plan and strategy were important but a lot of actions that underpin were ongoing.

The Chair asked if there were any targets in place to reduce air pollution.

Officers responded that it was difficult to set targets as the monitoring involved only small numbers of properties with a lot of variables that can influence the annual

mean results and therefore trends are looked at. He continued that the aim is to get below 40 µg/m³ in those areas.

The Chair referred to performance indicators which the committee received on a quarterly basis across a range of Durham County Council services, was there nothing that could be introduced in the form of an indicator and the recording of what action was to be taken in terms of performance to meet those targets. If put relief roads in should be able to estimate how many vehicles would be removed from the city centre as a result of the relief roads and therefore emissions should come down to a certain level in a certain time period.

Mr Wafer responded that they could not rely on that modelling to be definite, they knew how many vehicles a relief road would take out and air quality assessments had been carried out that were shown on the council's website.

Councillor Wilkes indicated that he appreciated the modelling that the service carried out, and the belief that the relief road would solve pollution issues. The problems with new roads will always result in more traffic regardless of whether you build new houses. There were proposals to build 1000's of new houses on green belt land around the city, green infrastructure, trees etc. absorbs carbon, there may not be a specific localised issue in a particular areas afterwards, but if you removed 400 hectares of green infrastructure around the city and build new houses with more cars this did not stack up and highlighted that he was concerned that the Council did not have targets, concerned that there was a plan but no targets or dates for progress and to resolve air quality issues in the city.

He then referred to some things that had not been done such as the bus lane on Gilesgate bank that could have been extended but businesses complained, and the authority needed to look at extending this bus lane and continued if it was not quicker on the bus, then people would continue to use their cars. He then referred to smaller buses on the route from Bowburn and commented that he failed to see why the council had not worked with Arriva to get in place electric buses on some of the routes where smaller buses were used. The Council should be assisting Arriva in putting this in place if possible.

Mr Wafer responded that bus priority measures were part of the city bid and that Gilesgate was to be looked at. In terms of buses generally the Council would assist operators in applying for grants, but the council could not provide direct funding. The council was currently looking at the park and ride buses and potentially replacing with electric vehicles.

Councillor Sexton referred to taxis in the city centre and asked if the council had any leverage such as incentives for operators to change to hybrid vehicles, could Durham County Council offer a reduction on the licence as an incentive.

Ms Holman responded that she had undertaken a study focusing on Durham taxis looking at the percentage of pollution Durham taxis contributed. She continued that Durham County Council's licensing team only had information about the taxis they granted licences to and therefore the study did not include taxis that may come into the city from other areas. She continued that there were incentives in other areas, but unless it could be demonstrated that there were massive issues with Durham taxis, they were unable to introduce incentives at this stage.

Councillor Sexton responded that it was not only about money it was about the environment and initiatives.

Ms Holman responded that she would like to use the evidence from the study when the review of the air quality action plan was undertaken.

Councillor Dunn indicated that taxis were a frustration particular those that queued along High Street onto New Elvet Bridge obstructing the traffic and those who were stationary with their engines on. He stated that they could look at the most lucrative taxi zones and making those electric only.

Ms Holman advised members that the authority had signed up to the regional common emission standards for taxis which would require operators to update their vehicles so fleets in those areas would comply to euro emissions 6 standard for vehicle engines by a certain date.

The Chair asked that officers take back that members felt that things were not progressing fast enough, that more needed to be done and that there was a need to consider how targets could be developed to determine improvements in air quality.

Resolved: (i) That the report and presentation be noted.

(ii) That a further progress report on the management of air quality in County Durham be included in the work programme for 2020/21.