

## **DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL**

At a Meeting of **Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in **Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham** on **Friday 8 October 2021** at **9.30 am**

**Present:**

**Councillor B Coult (Chair)**

**Members of the Committee:**

Councillors J Elmer, E Adam, P Atkinson, B Avery, L Brown, L Fenwick, G Hutchinson, R Manchester, D Nicholls, J Purvis, T Stubbs, S Townsend and M Stead (substitute for C Martin)

**Co-opted Members:**

Mrs P Holding

### **1 Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Charlton, B McAloon, C Martin, J Quinn and R Potts and Mr T Bolton.

### **2 Substitute Members**

Councillor M Stead substituted for Councillor C Martin.

### **3 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held 16 July 2021 were agreed as a correct record by the Committee and signed by the Chair.

### **4 Declarations of Interest**

There were no Declarations of Interest.

## **5 Any Items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties**

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

## **6 Climate Emergency Response Plan**

The Chair welcomed the Sustainability and Climate Change Team Leader, Maggie Bosanquet, the Principal Officer - Climate Change and Sustainability, Stephen McDonald, and the Carbon and Energy Analyst, Rosalind Farrow, who were in attendance to provide the Committee with a presentation on the Climate Emergency Response Plan (for copy see file of minutes).

The Carbon and Energy Analyst explained that Durham County Council (DCC) had a Carbon Management Plan since 2009, with the Council declaring a Climate Emergency in February 2019, with a Climate Emergency Response Plan (CERP) having been adopted by Cabinet in February 2020. Members were asked to note the Council's reduction in annual emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> since 2008/09, with there having been a 58 percent reduction to 2020/21. It was explained that the main element in terms of emissions in 2008/09 was electricity 55 percent, however this had reduced to around 32 percent by 2020/21. The Carbon and Energy Analyst noted that the main element was now heat and referred Members to a pie chart which gave a breakdown of each of the elements, electricity, heat and transport. Members noted the low level of business travel, impacted by the pandemic, however, it was explained that the Council's buildings, including schools, had still required heating. It was added that those issues could be addressed through better heating controls, insulation and low carbon heating systems. The Carbon and Energy Analyst noted that the Council's fleet was transitioning to electric vehicles (EVs) and the Council would look to increase the efficiency of its electrical appliances and generate its own renewable electricity wherever possible.

In reference to the Council's carbon targets, Members were reminded that the Council's Carbon Management Plan operated over five year periods and had done so since 2010. The Carbon and Energy Analyst explained that the target for the current Carbon Management Plan was for a 70 percent reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 2025, from the 2008/09 baseline, and an 80 percent reduction by 2030. Members were asked to note there were intermediate guideline targets for each year and that in the last two years the Council had been above target with a 51 percent reduction in 2020, against a target of 45 percent, and a 58 percent reduction in 2021, against a target of 56 percent. The Carbon and Energy Analyst noted that targets would become progressively harder to meet as more reduction would need to be made through invasive and expensive projects, such as the replacement of heating systems. It was added that the targets were for an actual reduction in emissions, it was not possible to look to help meet target through processes such as offsetting, planting trees or purchasing renewable electricity, although the Council did undertake both of those activities.

In respect of the cost involved and funding that was available, the Carbon and Energy Analyst explained there was the internal DCC Climate Emergency Fund that was available, also there was Government funds, however, they were heavily over-subscribed, with the £75 million that was made available in March 2021 been oversubscribed within one day of the scheme opening. In respect of decarbonising heating, it was estimated that if this was done across 150 of the Council's main buildings it would leave around 12,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> to manage across operations and fleet by 2030. It was estimated the cost in relation to heating would be approximately £100 million by 2030 and around £10 million in respect of electric vehicles by 2030, giving an average of around £14 million per year each year up to 2030.

The Committee were referred to a slide setting out the areas of priority from the CERP1, noting a requirement to roughly half emissions. The Carbon and Energy Analyst reiterated as regards the reduction in gas use, and noted that in terms of electricity, if the Council generated electricity via renewables, then it would be able to not only power its fleet of EVs and supply its buildings, it would also be able to sell surplus electricity to help fund other projects. It was explained that the reduction of the use of fossil fuels in terms of transport could be achieved through the continuation of remote working and encouraging this where it was practical to do so. In terms of schools, the Carbon and Energy Analyst noted there were hundreds of schools, that they were separate priority areas as they had their own budgets, and that there was a need to support them in a fair way in respect of decarbonising.

Members were asked to note CERP1 Actions relating to the Council, with 18 on track, four completed, one on hold, and five with delays. It was explained that the delays were due to access issues as a result of the pandemic or supply chain issues and also in some cases as some ERDF and RHI funding had been lost. Councillors noted that funding was being sought, including through the Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund.

The Carbon and Energy Analyst explained that the Council only accounted for around three percent of the carbon footprint of the County and referred Members to a graph showing the change in emissions for the County since 2005, though the baseline was 1990, with the percentages given representing a reduction from the 1990 baseline. It was noted that position was over halfway, with a 54 percent reduction since 1990, and Councillors were referred to pie-charts showing the reduction and breakdown of carbon emissions by source from 2005 and 2019. Members noted the reduction in electricity emissions by around two-thirds, with a slight increase in heat as a percentage and an increase in transport. It was explained that around one-third of the County's emissions came from heating homes, with one-third being from transport, and one-third split between electricity and non-domestic heating. It was explained the figures did not include through traffic on the A1(M), A19 and rail network.

The Carbon and Energy Analyst reiterated that the Council needed to cut its carbon footprint and explained that the recent Independent Panel on climate Change (IPCC) report had set out that it was important how quickly that was achieved. Members were referred to a graph showing the actual carbon footprint of the County from 2005 to present, and with three scenarios in relation to carbon budget up to 2050 based upon UK Government carbon targets for 2030, 2035 and 2050, CERP1 targets, and the scientific carbon budget for County Durham as calculated by the Tyndall Centre for Climate Research. She asked Members to note the differences in the UK Government and Tyndall budgets, with the UK Government targets looking at elements such as industry and freight. She added that there was some concern that it would be difficult to obtain sufficient funding and resources to go much beyond the UK Government budget. Members noted that the work in terms of CERP2 was looking to try and bring the Council's targets closer to the scientific carbon budget as calculated by the Tyndall Centre with the resources the Council had available.

The Carbon and Energy Analyst noted the period from 2019 to the end of CERP1, 2021, and explained that the County needed to shrink its footprint by eight percent by the end of the year, around 171,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>. Members noted that the CERP1 County priority areas were similar to the Council's priority areas and that in terms of heat, the reduction in gas use in homes required could be achieved by the equivalent of 20,000 home decarbonising or everyone using around eight percent less gas and oil which could be achieved in part through insulation projects. The Carbon and Energy Analyst explained that renewable electricity generation would support decarbonisation and that in terms of transport there was a need to reduce fossil fuel vehicle use by eight percent or to replace 24,000 fossil fuel vehicles with Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEVs). She added it could also be achieved if everyone drove a little less or used public transport, cycled or walked more and reduced unnecessary travel through use of remote working. The Carbon and Energy Analyst noted the countywide target to be carbon neutral, with offsetting being an additional factor, unlike with the Council's own targets. She explained that therefore work would continue to plant trees, restore peatland, protect the natural environment, and generate electricity through renewable means. She concluded by noting that CERP1 was 82 percent on track or complete and reiterated that delays were from funding loss or as a result of the pandemic.

The Chair thanked the Carbon and Energy Analyst and asked Members for their questions and comments.

Councillor L Brown noted two elements the Council could consider in order to help lower carbon emissions, allowing solar panels within Conservation Areas and insisting that all new developments plans had, at the very least, solar panels. She noted around 2,500 new properties at Bent House Lane and Sniperley, adding there was still time to amend the Masterplans to include renewable energy. The Carbon and Energy Analyst noted the Principal Officer - Climate Change and Sustainability may have more information, adding it was difficult to mandate.

The Principal Officer - Climate Change and Sustainability noted colleagues from Spatial Policy were looking at the Masterplan for Sniperley and he had given his views to them. He explained that there was not a blanket refusal for solar panels within Conservation Areas, rather each case would be looked at on its own merits. Councillor L Brown noted she would like to see a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) regarding solar panels and renewable energy, sooner rather than later.

Councillor E Adam thanked all the team for the huge amount of work being undertaken in relation to the CERP. He noted the issues in terms of those projects that were not actioned and referred to the graphs relating to the reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions for the Council and the County. He added that looking at those graphs, transport and heat stood out as key areas and those were not progressing as fast as the Council would like. He noted the issue of heat in schools and that the issue of transport in the area had not been tackled and asked as regards plans to reduce carbon emissions from transport from a county perspective and heat from schools, also asking if it would require Government funding or if it could be sustained through Council funds. The Carbon and Energy Analyst noted in relation to transport, the Council was moving to EVs for its fleet and pool cars and was encouraging remote working where appropriate to help reduce emissions. She noted the example of electric refuse vehicles. She added that in terms of county emissions it was more difficult as individuals had a choice in terms of how they would travel. She explained that one element was the Council speaking publicly as regards transport, with the new 'County Durham Climate Hub' website that was being launched being one way of being able to engage with the public across the spectrum of carbon reduction activities. The Carbon and Energy Analyst noted in respect of emissions from heating, particularly heat in schools, there was currently a number of projects looking to decarbonise heat entirely, funded by the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme. She added this had worked well as the upfront capital costs were effectively grant funded with the utility bill being roughly in line with the current costs. It was noted the up front capital cost in terms of technology, such as heat pumps, was the issue.

Councillor E Adam noted he felt that dealing with heat and transport issues would deal with the majority of the carbon emissions and noted the Council should be looking at what other Local Authorities were doing, in terms of restricting transport coming into cities and introducing electric buses, as he felt such measures were not coming forward from DCC. He noted similar issues in respect of heating in schools, accepting there were a number of schools now operating as Academies. He added that the Council needed to ensure that heating systems were upgraded, especially given the current position in terms of gas prices and added that it made sense to transfer to alternative heating systems.

Councillor E Adam noted he understood as regards the upfront financial cost associated and asked if the Council would approach Government again to explain to them that in order to decarbonise our schools, Government would need to help by providing appropriate funding. The Carbon and Energy Analyst noted the efforts in decarbonising by around 50 percent prior to declaration of the Climate Emergency and added she would hope that the work and resources would ramp up in terms of decarbonisation. She added that while the cost of electricity was expensive, the price of gas was increasing and, due to the large volumes of gas used, the amount spent on gas was significant. She noted that as gas became increasingly expensive and more difficult to obtain this would then provide a more compelling case for electric heating through technology such as heat pumps.

Councillor B Avery noted the points made by Councillor L Brown in terms of the introduction of solar panels, especially on new buildings, at the planning stage. He noted he felt it would be also beneficial as regards the inclusion of EV charging points at the planning stage for new build properties, noting the difficulty in terms of the existing terraced properties across the county. The Carbon and Energy Analyst noted that inclusion of charging points at homes would be beneficial, however, ideally there would be less vehicles in general, as they have a high carbon cost in terms of production and pollution from tyres and brake components, with increased car sharing and use of public transport being beneficial. The Principal Officer - Climate Change and Sustainability noted that it was not mandatory in respect of installing EV charging points within new developments, though he understood conversations were being had at the pre-application stage and he noted that many new schemes were including such charging points. He noted that the hardest element was the infrastructure in respect of EV charging for existing housing, such as terraced housing and flats. He reminded Members as regards the SOSCI (Scaling On Street Charging Infrastructure) project which had looked to install EV charging points within Council car parks within 100 metres of existing housing. He added the Council had been successful in a number of bids for grants to expand such work.

Councillor D Nicholls noted the need to encourage people to use cars less, however, given the state of public transport in the county, he felt that was difficult. He noted an example in his area, Deerness, with a resident that relied upon public transport having tried to catch a bus home at 4.00pm from Durham and not getting back until around 7.30pm. He added that the situation was ruining people's lives and asked what the Council was doing to address the issue, especially with Arriva North East. He noted the Council did provide subsidies in relation to bus services and added that many of the buses used in the county were from 2005. He asked why other areas appeared to have newer buses and were progressing and reiterated he felt the Council needed to address the issues with public transport and timetables in order to attract the public to use it more. The Chair noted the comments from Councillor D Nicholls would likely be echoed by many Members.

The Principal Officer - Climate Change and Sustainability noted that Spatial Policy and Transport colleagues would be best placed to respond on those points, however, he noted the actions within the CERP reflected upon public transport and he understood there had been many changes to bus timetables recently. The Chair noted Officers would take away the question to the service for a response.

Councillor E Adam noted page 84 of the report pack contained the slide that referenced the areas of priority for the county and set out information relating to the natural environment and offsetting. He asked how we were using our land and forests to reduce carbon emissions, and whether the separate report mentioned relating to the issue would be made available. He noted that the Vice-Chair, Councillor J Elmer had put a question to the Portfolio Holder at Council as regards an 'ecological emergency' and that the upcoming Cabinet agenda contained an item calling for further work to be undertaken on the issue. He asked as regards the impact that work could have in terms of existing staff, the work in relation to updating the CERP, and on the Work Programme for the Committee. The Carbon and Energy Analyst noted the slide within the agenda pack, when referring to a reduction of 48,000, it was not included within the graph as it would be a negative figure, as the graph showed emissions rather than what was offset. She added that the separate report mentioned was the next agenda item, which the Principal Officer - Climate Change and Sustainability would present. In respect of renewables, the Carbon and Energy Analyst noted that it was not included within the 48,000 figure relating to land use and change of forestry, though it was reported via the Council's website. She explained that in terms of ecology, she noted the Team could work with colleagues from Ecology on some schemes to improve biodiversity, noting an example being the development of the Tanfield Solar Farm. The Chair noted the point raised by Councillor E Adam and explained there would be conversations with the Portfolio Holder and Corporate Director as regards the impacts upon Officers and the Work Programme, with an update to come back to Committee.

Councillor J Elmer noted one of the key areas of emissions was Council staff traveling to work in cars, adding there was a desperate need for a Council Travel Plan. He added that, in terms of transport across the County, the Council did have influence in respect of strategic policy relating to the infrastructure network for travel, including making space for buses, cyclists and walking, understanding that was also a Spatial Policy matter. He added there was a need for the Council to make sure its services were joined up in tackling those issues.

In relation to carbon emissions, Councillor J Elmer noted that certain elements that were in the control of the Council to influence, but were not incorporated within the reported figures, these included emissions associated with: staff travel, sometimes referred to as 'the grey fleet'; Council investments; Council procurement; Council pensions; and emissions from the incineration of household waste and waste to landfill. He asked whether the emissions associated with those activities would be reported back to Overview and Scrutiny so that Members could have a more complete picture.

The Carbon and Energy Analyst noted the issue of staff commuting and explained it was very difficult to ask thousands of people to change the way that they travelled to work, having no control over what type of vehicle they bought. She added that to ascertain the emissions associated with commuting would be a huge task, surveying the staff, and also the staff were currently operating in a position between working from home moving towards a hybrid model of working. She explained that in terms of the other areas of Council activity that had associated emissions there was one element that was reported upon, namely incineration from the energy from waste plant as part of the Council's waste emissions. The Carbon and Energy Analyst noted the remaining elements mentioned would fall under "scope three", emissions that were harder to tackle. She added that there were procurement plans within the CERP and there were sustainable policies within the Procurement Section.

Councillor J Elmer noted 502 residents responded to the consultation on the CERP, representing a tiny proportion of the population in the county and noted it was likely many of those responding were already aware of the associated issues. He noted that a conversation was needed to engage with the wider community in order for people to take ownership of the work and to illicit behavioural change. He asked going forward what plans there were in terms of seriously engaging with residents across the county. The Carbon and Energy Analyst noted there were a few ways, including the ECO2 Smart programme which went into all of the schools in the county, engaging with children who in turn engage with their parents, very successful over a number of years. She explained that the 502 residents mentioned were those who had completed an official survey response, however, there had been a lot more people engaged with. She noted that all Areas Action Partnerships (AAPs) had been engaged with, as well as other groups. It was added that in future, there was a desire for the conversation to be ongoing, so rather than solely having a consultation events, there would be an ongoing process that would take place in part via the new Climate Change Hub website. She explained that it would be a place that people could contact the Team and also share information and it was hoped the whole county could get involved in what was a whole county issue.

The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager, Tom Gorman explained that in relation to transport, and bus services in particular, Members at the recent meeting of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee had made a number of comments relating to those services. He reminded Members that the issue of integrated transport was identified within the Work Programme for Spring, with a joint session with the Environment and Sustainable Communities and Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committees. In respect of third party emissions from areas such as procurement, investment, pensions and staff travel, the Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager noted work to organise a session looking at those issues.

He added that at the meeting looking at integrated transport there would also be the Pensions Manager, an officer from procurement and the Environment and Design Manager in attendance to speak as regards scope three emissions, scope one being Council emissions, scope two being countywide emissions. The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager noted in terms of an 'ecological emergency', work was ongoing through the Environment Partnership, with any work of the Committee needing to compliment any Ecological Plan that came forward. The Overview and Scrutiny Officer, Diane Close noted the comments from Members on CERP1 would be fed back to Officers, as well as the questions from the Vice-Chair. She added that the comments from Members, including key comments from the Vice-Chair, would be collated into a response from the Committee to be shared with Members to be agreed and once agreed subsequently passed to the Low Carbon Team, Portfolio Holder and Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change with a view to inform the development of CERP2. She added a further update relating to CERP2 would be given at a future meeting of the Committee.

### **Resolved:**

- 6.1 That the Committee note the progress made against delivering during the second year of the Climate Change Emergency Response Plan.
- 6.2 That comments made by Members in relation to the Climate Change Emergency Response Plan be formulated into a response to be shared with the Committee for agreement.
- 6.3 That the Overview and Scrutiny response be shared with the Low Carbon Team, Cabinet Portfolio Holder and Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change.
- 6.4 That the Committee, at a future date, as part of the 2021/22 Work Programme, receive a report and presentation in relation to the Climate Change Emergency Response Plan 2.

## **7 Renewable Energy Projects**

The Chair asked the Principal Officer - Climate Change and Sustainability to give a presentation on the Renewable Energy Projects (for copy see file of minutes).

The Principal Officer - Climate Change and Sustainability noted the presentation would look to outline information as regards renewable energy and capacity in County Durham, along with a number of projects the Council had developed over the last 12 months. He referred Members to graphs showing renewable energy capacity for the County, with the data coming from the Government Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and being two years in arrears, with 2020 data due to be shared shortly. He explained that the picture was fairly static following an initial rise in wind energy, with changes in legislation halting such schemes.

He noted a decrease in renewable energy capacity in 2018/19 of 4MW, a decrease in terms of the onshore wind capacity, a concern. He noted the increase in solar / photovoltaic (PV) since 2014. He referred to a graph highlighting renewable energy generation in the county, the amounts generated, and explained as regards the larger amount of wind energy generation in 2015, due to windier weather, with a small decrease in generation in 2018/19, and noted the contribution from plant biomass.

The Principal Officer - Climate Change and Sustainability noted one new project was that at the new Seaham Garden Village, with proposals to heat around 1,500 homes through heat from mine water. It was explained that the Coal Authority were required to pump and clean mine water, in perpetuity, to ensure it did not pollute the local aquifer used for drinking water. He added the Coal Authority had noted the temperature of the mine water, around 20°C and were using it to heat their treatment plant at Dawdon. He noted as the Seaham Garden Village proposals came forward a district heating scheme was proposed, with Council, Durham University, Coal Authority and Tolent, the developer, all working together in terms of a partnership approach. He explained that funding was obtained from BEIS to undertake a feasibility study and the study noted the project was a viable proposal. Members learned that the housing developers going into the site were signed up to the project and the project was at the stage of going out to tender in respect of the delivery of a concession model, for a design, build and operate model for a district heating network. The Principal Officer - Climate Change and Sustainability noted residents would have price protection, being cheaper than the equivalent costs associated with gas heating. He noted colleagues from Regeneration could provide additional information and added there had been Ministerial visits to the pumping and treatment site, as well as from international delegates, as the technology had implications for the legacy mining areas worldwide.

The Committee were informed of the Domestic Housing Retrofits, with many successful funding bids over the last 12 months. The Principal Officer - Climate Change and Sustainability referred to LAD (Local Authority Delivery) bids funding work at Chilton and Dene Bank and noted the partners involved. He added that other projects included: Electric Vans, 'Try before you Buy'; community EV Charging Network through SOSCI, WEVA (Weardale Electric Vehicle Accelerator), DOCS (Durham Own Charge Point Sites) and REV UP (Regional electric vehicle unified plan); Borrow a Bike Scheme; Project Gigabit Broadband; Marine Carbon; and the South Stanley SuDS (Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems) Accelerator.

The Principal Officer - Climate Change and Sustainability noted that Heat Decarbonisation projects included those at Woodland Primary School with air-source heat pumps; new solar / PV sites; solar car ports, with some EU funding for canopies for car parks; micro wind exploration; Durham City District Heat Network Business Case; and Lumley School, integrating solar / PV into the new roof. He explained as regards the launch of the new County Durham Climate Hub website at the end of October and noted the next steps in relation to CERP2.

The Chair thanked the Principal Officer - Climate Change and Sustainability and asked Members for their questions and comments.

Councillor T Duffy referred to the graph showing renewable energy generation and noted that the roughly static position in terms of the amounts generated, with wind being the largest component and also the component with the most fluctuation. He noted steady progress in terms of solar. He asked whether the reduction in landfill gas generation was due to less waste going to landfill, what work was being undertaken in terms of growing solar as a renewable at the larger scale, working with industry and Durham University, and whether any schemes involving wave power were being looked at, given the county had a large coastline. The Principal Officer - Climate Change and Sustainability noted the decrease in landfill gas generation, with more now being sent for incineration at Teesside. In respect of solar, he noted the opportunities in terms of expansion, highlighting the power generation at the Council's data centre at Tanfield. He added a factor in terms of solar included the cost of an electricity upgrades that may be required, and the lead-in times associated with such works. He noted work looking at old landfill sites as possible solar / PV sites and some other small wind sites. The Principal Officer - Climate Change and Sustainability noted that wave generation had not been looked at, though he noted some projects in Scotland, adding such schemes depended upon on the types of waves in an area.

Councillor E Adam noted page 90 of the agenda pack referred to wind turbines and stated, 'a number of sites may prove to be viable'. He asked whether that was a focus on Council properties and whether the Council should promote greater uptake from the private sector. He asked if the Council was looking at options in terms of energy storage. The Principal Officer - Climate Change and Sustainability noted one site had been assessed as viable and was at the planning stage, adding there were other sites with more work to be done. He added that Council land was being looked at, with potential to link to buildings to help displace electricity from the grid. He noted the County Durham Plan (CDP) contained a wind energy policy and a wind turbine evidence paper which set out large areas that could be suitable for wind energy at a larger scale. He noted as the scale increased there was less land available, noting that was an area private developers could come forward, although he was not aware of many schemes in the last few years. In terms of solar / PV applications, he noted there had been a lot of applications, with some schemes as large as 50MW. He added that storage was important and if some schemes were to expand, and the cost of battery technology was to fall, then it may be possible to look at each solar / PV scheme.

Councillor E Adam added that CERP2 should include small and micro scale wind and asked as regards the Seaham Garden Village and the purchase of land referred to at paragraph 18, page 91 of the report.

He noted that the type of energy generation referred to was in the public interest and asked why the Council were purchasing land to put these types of generation in place, and asked whether, as there was public interest if compulsory purchase or land being given to the Council for such energy generation could be options, given the mining legacy across the county. The Principal Officer - Climate Change and Sustainability noted there had been a lot of discussions as regards who would own and operate the scheme, with the Council becoming involved in an enabling role.

Councillor B Avery noted the scheme mentioned at Chilton and Dene Bank was very good and when finished the majority would be to a good standard. He noted the slow progress in relation to Newton Street, with some scaffolding having been in place for over six months, he added he had raised the issue with the Housing Regeneration Project Manager. The Chair noted the issue would be mentioned to the service with a response provided.

Councillor M Stead noted he was new to the Local Authority and new to the Committee, in attendance as a substitute. He noted the fantastic work undertaken so far, adding he was looking forward to the new website and noted he would wish to make a few comments in advance of CERP2. He asked if, when putting the proposals to Cabinet, whether a need to increase the staff within the department had been identified, noting the comments from Councillor E Adam in terms of the additional pressures on staff. He asked as regards fact-finding trips to look at activities and technologies and noted the upcoming popular Lumiere event and suggested a similarly scaled event relating to climate change may be beneficial in attracting relevant companies to participate to show off their technologies and innovations. He noted the comments from Members in relation to public transport and noted there were some positives, in terms of the new bus station development in the city and new technologies. He noted the targets through to 2030, 2035 and explained he liked to look back at what we had been doing 10 years ago to be able to take stock of the progress made, citing the rapid progress in battery technology, adding that he had real faith in the technology that was emerging. He noted progress in the Far East with the four main motorbike manufacturers working together to standardise batteries. Councillor M Stead explained an issue in being able to convince people to move away from the current technology was that current petrol and diesel motorcars had a range of around 300 miles from a tank of petrol and there was an existing comprehensive network of fuel stations across the country. He explained that the four motorbike companies had a system whereby a standardised battery could be easily removed from their vehicle, placed on charge at a charging station and swapped for an already charged battery to be the easily fitted to their vehicle so it would be ready to go. He noted there was a lot of exciting progress being made worldwide and hoped that further information could be brought forward in respect of the work of the Council, however, he cautioned as regards how quickly technology could become supplanted, noting charging points as a possible example.

The Principal Officer - Climate Change and Sustainability noted Officers would be happy to speak to Durham University and industry experts and leaders as regards developing such ideas. He noted a company, Power Roll, based at Jade Business Park, Murton, that specialised in producing flexible solar/ PV panels on a roll and noted as such technologies improved, they would become more widespread and cost-effective.

Councillor J Elmer thanked the Officers for all of the fantastic work they were doing on a number of projects. He noted he felt that those Officers need more influence over the strategic direction of the Council, adding the Team had often needed to refer an issue to another Team, such as Spatial Policy. He noted such areas included strategic direction on transport, planning decision making, household insulation, district heating systems. He added that it was possible to influence such matters through various means, such as SPDs as mentioned by Councillor L Brown. He noted the cost of solar car port project was quite expensive, with a figure of £5 million, and explained he thought that the same outcome could be achieved by switching the Council's energy supplier to one that could guarantee 100 percent generation from renewable sources, and with the £5 million being used for other activities, such as retrofitting existing housing with insulation and new heating systems. The Principal Officer - Climate Change and Sustainability noted the solar car port scheme was looking at the potential for such schemes, with areas such as Nottingham developing such schemes, highlighting the high returns in terms of electricity generated. The Carbon and Energy Analyst noted that spending money on solar car ports was beneficial as they would provide additional electricity back to the grid, in a sense being an invest to save, to help develop more projects whereas insulating a property would not help to generate additional income to feed back into projects. The Sustainability and Climate Change Team Leader explained the £5 million referred to was a bid to the EU Cities funding scheme and originally it had been turned down with the Council informed that the proposals were not of a grand enough scale. She explained that subsequently the Council submitted a second bid in partnership with Durham University, County Durham and Darlington NHS Trust and the Environment Agency, which was successful. She noted that the bid was the only UK bid to receive any funding from the last tranche of EU Cities Fund, around £60,000 to develop a commercial business case for solar car ports. The Sustainability and Climate Change Team Leader noted that the Council was not currently investing any money, though it may choose to do so if the business case was attractive. She added that the Council had a large area in terms of its car parks, and it could be a good opportunity to generate energy, alongside other green works to the car parks, where viable with the grid.

**Resolved:**

That the renewable energy data and progress made on new projects in 2021 be noted.

## **8 Quarter Four 2020/2021 - Outturn Budget Report**

The Chair introduced the Finance Manager - Neighbourhoods and Climate Change, Phil Curran who was in attendance to speak to Members in relation to the Quarter Four 2020/21 Revenue Capital Outturn (for copy see file of minutes).

The Finance Manager - Neighbourhoods and Climate Change referred Members to the information relating to Quarter Four 2020/21 with the service reporting an underspend of approximately £1.1 million, against a revised budget of approximately £112 million. He noted COVID-19 costs of £7.125 million excluded from the outturn position, those costs covered by Government COVID grant. He added the report broke down the figures by Heads of Service and the report also set out the variances. Members noted the Cash Limit Reserve carried forward for Neighbourhoods and Climate Change was £1.294 million and this gave a level of flexibility in terms of any unbudgeted expenditure in the future. It was added that the forecast outturn took into account net contributions to reserves of £3.2 million, consisting of a contribution to reserves of £4 million for future service initiatives, and also COVID-19 funding that was carried forward to 2021/22, as well as a £700,000 drawdown from reserves to fund the cost of the North Pennines Area of Natural Outstanding Beauty (ANOB) for that financial year. He noted the revised capital spend of £43.713 million with an underspend of approximately £8 million, with more detail of the Capital Programme being set out at Appendix 3.

### **Resolved:**

That the report be noted.

## **9 Quarter One Performance Report**

The Chair asked the Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager, Tom Gorman to provide the Committee with an update in relation to the Quarter One, 2020/21 Performance Management Report (for copy see file of minutes).

The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager thanked the Chair and referred Members to the information as set out within the report pack. He explained the report contained the areas that fell within the remit of the Committee and noted the report was presented under the four ambitions as set out within the Council Plan. He explained that in relation to 'more and better jobs' the area looked at by the Committee, jointly with the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee was tourism. He noted the three main metrics in relation to tourism were: the vibrancy of the visitor economy, visitor numbers; jobs supported; and the money generated. He added that for the 2020 calendar year, all three had been heavily impact by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Members were informed that the impact had been variable across the county, with Durham City impacted the most being the major tourism centre for the county, however, the county as a whole fared better than other areas across the country, with the majority of the visitors to the county coming from the region.

The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager explained a survey of local tourism businesses by Visit County Durham (VCD) on the impact of COVID-19 on businesses, showed a more positive picture following the lifting of lockdown restrictions, with most businesses reporting that they had been able to reopen with healthy numbers of enquires and bookings. It was noted that 18 percent of businesses were predicting summer occupancy to exceed pre-COVID-19 levels, though that may be as a result of continuing international restrictions. Members noted businesses had shared their concerns as regards the potential for further lockdowns and noted booking were more 'last minute'. The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager explained the Council had been awarded £2 million in external funding to support future tourism initiatives, with £1.2 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund for the new history centre at Mount Oswald and £724,000 from The Arts Council to support festivals and events such as Lumiere. He added the Council had been reopening its own visitor attractions such as the Killhope Museum, Bishop Auckland and Durham Town Halls and the Empire and Gala Theatres, with refurbishments having been undertaken to the theatres during the lockdown period. He noted that the Council's bid for City of Culture 2025 had been successful in reaching the long list of eight areas, which in turn helps to generate interest in the county as a destination. It was added that the next meeting of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 11 November, would receive an update report from VCD and Members of the Environment and sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be invited to attend for that item.

In respect of the 'long and independent lives' ambition, the information relating to waste processing showed that the pandemic had impacted upon the amount of domestic refuse that was generated by households, also reflected nationally. The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager explained that had been reflected in three major impacts locally, including an increase in tonnage of the waste collected, with a reduction in the proportion waste that was recyclable, and an increase in the tonnage of kerbside waste and that processed by the household waste recycling centres (HWRCs), again another trend seen nationally, including an increase in relation to the amount of waste diverted to landfill, nine percent up from five percent, though figures were returning to normal levels. He added the third element was an increase in the proportion of kerbside recycling that was contaminated, though those figures had been increasing for a time and may not be wholly attributable to the pandemic. He noted the financial impact of increased contaminated recycling, as the contractors that the Council employed to process the recycling sell the recyclable materials and were not able to do so if contaminated and would need to be diverted to another waste stream.

The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager highlighted the countywide action launched by the Council in terms of the recycling of small electronic appliances, with 29 collections points across the county.

In relation to the 'connected communities' ambition it was noted one of the indicators related to the blight caused by fly-tipping, with numbers having increased approximately 10 percent over the last 12 months to the end of June 2021. It was explained that figures were returning to pre-COVID-19 levels, with the latest figures to September 2021 was 7,382 incidents, broadly comparable with the reports up to September 2020. It was added the report detailed the work in terms of investigations and enforcement actions undertaken by Neighbourhood Wardens.

It was explained that the latest environmental cleanliness survey results for the April to July 2021 period had been collated, however, it was noted the survey had not been completed for that period in 2020 due to lockdown restrictions in place at the time. The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager added that therefore the latest results were compared to the average results for the previous year, though that would not take into account issues such as seasonality. He explained that figures were similar in terms of litter and dog fouling, however there was a significant improvement in relation to detritus.

In connection with the 'excellent Council' ambition and the effective use of resources, the environmental impact of the use of those resources was considered, with a number of projects relating to the reduction of carbon emissions having been presented to Members earlier in the meeting. The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager added the report contained additional information, including creating a zero carbon Council depot at Morrison Busty, involving development of a solar farm, LED lighting, to be completed by Summer 2022.

The Chair thanked the Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager and asked Members for their comments and questions.

Councillor E Adam noted the information relating to waste collection over the pandemic period and asked as regards the waste to energy, noting he did not see information detailing the increase of waste sent to incineration, and with any associated increases in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from additional incineration and transport of waste. The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager noted that could be included for a future report to give a more rounded picture of the impact of waste disposal with the Chair adding that waste management would be reported at the next meeting of the Committee. Councillor E Adam noted that a previous infographic within the performance report had included those details and asked if there was a reason that it had been condensed. The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager noted changes to reports following the changes to align with Council Plan ambitions but would look to provide a better picture of how our kerbside waste is processed.

The Finance Manager - Neighbourhoods and Climate Change noted the increased tonnage in terms of waste collected, and while there was an increase in terms of the amount diverted to landfill, he noted that did not necessarily mean there was less recycling, rather higher tonnages of waste in general.

Councillor J Atkinson asked as regards the improvements as set out in the environmental cleanliness survey, noting from his experience there were issues and wondered if it was a case of less reporting of incidents. The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager explained that the survey was carried out three times a year using a national methodology, with 500 transects used, with people physically going out to survey areas and score them according to the Keep Britain Tidy scheme. He added that figures in the report for the period April to July 2021 probably misleadingly were compared to the average for the previous year. This was because there were no figures available for the same period in 2020 as no inspections were carried out due to the pandemic. He noted that when compared to the same period for 2019 the figures for dog fouling were statistically similar.

**Resolved:**

That the report be noted.

## **10 Quarter One 2021/22 Outturn Budget Report**

The Chair asked the Finance Manager - Neighbourhoods and Climate Change to speak to Members in relation to the Quarter One Forecast of Revenue and Capital Outturn 2021/22 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Finance Manager - Neighbourhoods and Climate Change referred Members to the information relating to Quarter One 2021/22 with the service reporting a forecast underspend of approximately £114,000, against a revised budget of approximately £105 million, with COVID-19 costs of £3.5 million excluded from the forecast outturn position, those costs covered by Government COVID grant. He noted while the costs were significantly less than the previous year, they were still required in particular to waste disposal costs. He added the report broke down the figures by Heads of Service and the report also set out the variances. It was explained that the forecast Cash Limit Reserve position at 31 March 2022 was £1.008 million after taking the latest outturn position into account and it was noted the amount was not earmarked and gave the service a level of flexibility in terms of any unbudgeted expenditure.

The Finance Manager - Neighbourhoods and Climate Change noted the outturn also took account of the net use of earmarked reserves of £3.8 million, including a drawdown of approximately £4 million for future service initiatives such as waste procurement, Castle and Cathedral lighting and funding for AAPs from the Towns and Villages Reserve.

It was noted there was a contribution of approximately £500,000 in relation to one-off unspent investments for the Find and Fix programme. Members were asked to note a revised capital budget of £56.942 million, with a spend to date of £7.102 million with more detail of the Capital Programme at Appendix 3. It was noted while the spend to date represented a small percentage of the overall budget, it was explained the spend was in line with the profile, with the majority of the capital budget to be spend in the remaining part of the year.

Councillor E Adam noted that previously Overview and Scrutiny budget reports included an additional appendix which set out further details as regards over and under spends and asked if it would be reintroduced or if it had been removed for a particular reason. The Finance Manager - Neighbourhoods and Climate Change noted it had been removed in line with the reports produced for some other Committees, however, he noted he would take the feedback to the Head of Finance. Councillor D Nicholls noted he felt that the level of detail was important and that if it was included for the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee, he felt other Committees would also benefit from having that same level of detail included.

**Resolved:**

That the report be noted.