

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham on **Monday 12 October 2015 at 9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor B Graham (Chairman)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors E Adam, D Bell, J Clare, J Clark, J Gray, I Jewell, P May, A Liversidge, S Morrison and L Taylor

Co-opted Members:

Mrs P Spurrell

1 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Armstrong, E Bell, D Hall, C Kay, O Milburn and T Bolton.

2 Substitute Members

There were no substitute members.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on 8 July 2015 and 14 September 2015 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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 Media Relations

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer referred Members to the recent prominent articles and news stories relating to the remit of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee (for copy see file of minutes). The articles were:-

- Durham Puts on a Blooming Good Show - Having triumphed in the Northumbria in Bloom large town category last year, Durham was now going for national gold, representing the region in Britain in Bloom.
- Successful Recycling Campaign to Continue for Another Year – The ‘bin it right’ campaign to encourage residents to recycle their household waste correctly had been extended for another year following its success.
- Green Flags Fly High in County Durham - Fourteen open spaces across the county had been awarded Green Flag status for 2015. These included six parks and two countryside sites, while six cemeteries/crematoriums were also recognised - the highest number held by any local authority in the country.
- New Roundabout Open for Traffic after £1.8m Project is Completed - The roundabout near the Honest Lawyer, outside Durham was completed ahead of schedule.
- Milburngate Bridge Works Complete – The works were complete ahead of schedule and had attracted positive comments.

Councillor Clark referred to the beautiful verges at West Auckland and asked that the relevant department be praised.

Resolved: That the presentation be noted.

7 Update on Flooding Recommendations

The committee considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive and Corporate Director of Neighbourhood Services which gave an update on the recommendations contained within the Flooding Scrutiny Review published in September 2014 (for copy of report, see file of minutes).

The Head of Technical Services and the Drainage and Coastal Protection Manager gave Members a presentation on the Flood and Coastal Protection Update which provided details of the schemes detailed in the Medium Term Financial Plan which amounted to £3.5m some of which had been completed and all schemes had an element of environment agency funding.

Using surface water flood maps they had identified approximately 10,000 properties at risk from a 1:100 year storm flooding event and they were working thorough the list to identify viable schemes that could be put into the Medium Term Financial Plan, Year 7 (2021-2027).

They went on to talk about the development of sustainable urban drainage systems approval body to advise that the Government had made amendments to the National Policy Framework and that the Drainage and Coastal Protection Team are statutory consultees that provided advice on all major development. Durham County Council had worked with private landlords in relation to flooding of private land impacting on Durham County Council land. The authority has legislation at its disposal should enforcement action be required by way of the Highway Act and the Land Drainage Act but most landowners co-operate fully with the authority. They also referred to the recent amendments to policy 46 which incorporated the changes to the National Planning Policy Framework and technical standards for Sustainable Drainage Systems. The Council had developed a draft options policy and guide in consultation with planners and developers, the maintenance

works for suds on new developments is proposed to be paid for by an annual payment made by the residents that were served by the sustainable drainage systems, should the developer choose to request Durham County Council to adopt and maintain the suds on new developments.

They concluded the presentation by providing members with details of the works that had been done at Witton Gilbert to prevent flooding.

Councillor May referred to the works that had been done at Witton Gilbert which looked spectacular but he sought clarification on the safety of the site as the flood ponds looked deep.

Officers responded that the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) had been engaged to carry out a risk assessment and they were happy with the site subject to some minor modifications. The area was fenced and the banks of the ponds were not that steep.

Councillor Jewell sought clarification on the cost of maintenance of the site at Witton Gilbert. In response to the question Members were advised that before the works were carried out the site required intense maintenance. They had consulted with land owners with regard to ditching and they all understood what was required to maintain the ditches. The area did not require any grass cutting or excavation so maintenance was a minimum.

The Chairman referred to Sustainable Drainage Systems and asked who informed home owners that they were responsible for the maintenance costs. Officers responded that the system did not disadvantage residents as developers previously added this cost to the cost of the property so this system should make the property cheaper initially. The system was similar to water rates and the money was collected in the same way as council tax. The Sustainable Drainage System should be reflected in the deeds of the property but the payment should be made clear to residents during the conveyance stage of the purchase.

Councillor May commented that this could impact on other areas and could residents be asked to pay for services like grass cutting. Officers responded that it was a progressive system and the cost was divided by all properties and was based on the square footage of the property. The maintenance was indexed linked to inflation so could go up or down and would be reviewed periodically.

Councillor Clark asked if the new Sustainable Drainage System scheme would impact on the house insurance for residents that were affected by the flooding. Officers responded that they would offer residents a letter to provide to their insurance company and they understood that it was reflected in the insurance premium.

Les Hall, Development Manager, Northumbrian Water Ltd was in attendance and provided members with the background into his role which he had held since 2007 and had worked with various local authorities.

He provided members with an update in relation to the status of current projects and details of projects which had recently been released including schemes at Crook Hall, Windelstone, Barker Haugh, University, Aycliffe, Bearpark, Chilton and Tudhoe Mill and Witton Gilbert. He also provided details of existing works which were to be updated

including Bishop Middleham, Sherburn, Chester le Street, East Tanfield, Hussledown and Ramshaw and that they had a rolling programme to update sewerage works.

Councillor Clare sought clarification on the sewerage treatment and the impact from water. Les Hall provided Councillor Clare with details of the processes involved.

Councillor May referred to the water supply and how much investment was needed to supply to estates. Les Hall indicated that this was not his area but would provide Councillor May with a written response.

The Chairman thanked Les Hall for attending the meeting and indicated that the capital programme was good and the partnership was working well.

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

(ii) That the Committee receive a further report detailing progress made against the recommendations contained in the scrutiny review at a future meeting.

8 Performance Management Quarter 1 2015/16

The committee received a report and presentation of the Corporate Management Team, Assistant Chief Executive and Leader which presented progress against the Council's basket of performance indicators for the Altogether Greener theme and report other performance issues for the first quarter of the 2015/16 financial year, covering the period April to June 2015 (for copy of report and slides of presentation, see file of minutes).

The Customer Relations Policy and Performance Manager provided a detailed presentation which gave an update on performance relating to the following:-

- Performance summary
- Key message in relation to cleaner, more attractive, sustainable environment.
- Refuse and recycling.
- Improved environmental cleanliness: litter and detritus.
- Improved environmental cleanliness: dog fouling.
- Fly-tipping.
- Actions and outcomes: operation: stop it.
- An improved local environment.
- Condition of the local authority road network.
- Carbon emissions.
- Maximise value and benefits of the natural environment.

The Chairman thanked the Officer for her presentation, which showed a very positive picture.

Councillor Clark indicated that it was a good report and sought clarification on the removal of the garden waste bins for those residents who did not take up the scheme.

The Customer Relations Policy and Performance Manager responded that a letter drop was going to be done about the green waste scheme and once they knew the take up of

the scheme they would look into collecting the bins for those who had not signed up. She also commented that the Council would not remove any bins which were not empty.

Councillor May asked for details of what a PACE interview was.

The Officer responded by informing him that this was an interview of alleged flytippers conducted by council officers under caution and followed procedures set down in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act. (PACE)

Councillor Clare also referred to the garden waste scheme and that there was a lot of dissatisfaction with the scheme and asked for an update on the scheme as there was 6,000 tonnes of waste not collected and he feared that the take up for next year would be reduced.

The Customer Relations Policy and Performance Manager responded that they were doing lots of monitoring and that a full update on the Garden Waste Scheme by the Head of Projects and Business Services would be coming to the next meeting which will cover the points raised by Councillors Clark and Clare.

Councillor Jewell referred to litter bins and in his area a lot of residents picked up litter and left it in sacks to the side of litter bins which had resulted in other residents placing inappropriate rubbish next to the bins.

The Customer Relations Policy and Performance Manager responded that this was classed as flytipping and all flytipping data was analysed.

The Chairman sought clarification if the Council worked with housing associations about inappropriate rubbish left next to bins and could a leaflet be produced to advise residents that this was classed a fly tipping.

The Customer Relations Policy and Performance Manager responded that they had a lot of service level agreements in place and worked closely with housing associations and the 'stop it' campaign was currently looking at white goods.

Resolved: That the contents of the report and presentation be noted.

9 European Structural and Investment Funding Update

The committee considered a report of the Corporate Director, Regeneration and Economic Development which provided Members with details of the latest developments with regard to European Structural and Investment Funds Low Carbon Economy funding and set out the opportunities that were available to County Durham (for copy of report, see file of minutes).

The Sustainability and Climate Change Team Leader updated Members on the current position and advised that the exchange rate had currently changed which had resulted in a reduced value for the allocation from £18m to £10m and that transport was no longer part of the programme.

Durham County Council's Business Energy Efficiency project bid had been submitted and County Durham Business Hub had also submitted their bid.

The bid by Auckland Castle Trust for a geothermal renewable energy scheme for Auckland Castle had also been submitted. Durham University and the Environment Agency had also submitted a bid to create a water science hub which would be a virtual research and innovation platform on water, science and technology.

Members were also advised that the guidance had been issued which was released on 24 September 2015 and the deadline for bids was 25 September 2015.

The Chairman thanked the Officer for her very informative presentation and hoped that the Council were successful with the bids.

Councillor Clare asked if there were any opportunities and plans for insulation.

The Officer responded that they were pushing innovative schemes and that wall insulation was not new and that there were schemes in the Craghead and South Moor areas that were innovative. The Sustainable and Climate Change Team Leader advised she would provide the Overview and Scrutiny Officer with a copy of the guidance.

Resolved: That the contents of the report be noted.

10 Budget Outturn Quarter 4 2014/15 and Quarter 1 2015/16

The Committee considered a report and presentation by the Finance Manager – Neighbourhood Services which set out details of the final outturn as at Quarter 4 for 2014/15 and highlighted variances against revenue and capital budgets for Neighbourhood Services (for copy of report and slides of presentation, see file of minutes).

The Finance Manager – Neighbourhood Services in delivering his presentation indicated that there was an under spend of £2.984m and gave Members reasons for the under spend. He also advised Members that the capital outturn had an underspend of £5.141m and gave Members the reasons for the underspend.

The Committee also considered a report and presentation by the Finance Manager – Neighbourhood Services which set out details of the forecast outturn at Quarter 1 for 2015/16 and highlighted variances against revenue and capital budgets for Neighbourhood Services (for copy of report and slides of presentation, see file of minutes).

The Finance Manager – Neighbourhood Services in delivering his presentation indicated that Neighbourhood Services had an under spend of £0.576m and gave Members the reasons for the under spend. He also advised Members that the Capital Programme had been revised to £48.504m due to additional funding sources been identified and it was anticipated that the full budget would be spent in 2015/16.

Councillor May referred to the mild winter last year and if savings had been made in the winter maintenance budget. The Finance Manager responded that in 2014/15 there had been an underspend of £700,000 and they currently had a reserve of £1.5m which was available in the event of severe weather.

Resolved: (i) That the final 2014/15 outturn position on Revenue and Capital be noted.

(ii) That the Quarter 1 forecast outturn position on Revenue and Capital for 2015/16 be noted.

11 Verbal Update on Light Touch Review of Parking on Council Land

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer advised Members that she was currently working on the report which would be submitted to the next scrutiny committee before it was submitted to the relevant portfolio holder.

12 Minutes from Durham Strategic Flood Prevention Group held on 20 May 2015

The minutes from the Durham Strategic Flood Prevention Group held on 20 May 2015 were received for information.

13 Minutes of the Meeting of the County Durham Environment Partnership Board held on 16 June 2015

The minutes of the meeting of the County Durham Environment Partnership Board held on 16 June 2015 were received for information.