

## **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 6 March 2017 at 9.30 am**

### **Present:**

**Councillor B Graham (Chairman)**

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

Councillors E Adam, J Armstrong, D Bell, J Clare, J Gray, I Jewell, B Kellett, A Liversidge, P May, O Milburn, P Stradling and L Taylor

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

Mr T Bolton

### **1 Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Hall, C Kay and Mrs P Spurrell.

### **2 Substitute Members**

There were no substitute Members in attendance.

### **3 Minutes**

The minutes of the meetings held on 24 January 2017 and 6 February 2017 were agreed as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

### **4 Declarations of Interest**

There were no Declarations of Interest.

### **5 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 recent press articles relating to the remit of Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee;

- Spruce up heads to Framwellgate Moor – Operation Spruce Up was a chance for schools, businesses and community groups to give town and village centres across the County a deep clean with one location chosen each month
- County Durham cleans up at annual Tidy Britain Awards – Durham County Council was named Local Authority of the Year and its anti-fly-tipping programme, Operation Stop It was winner of Environmental Campaign of the Year
- Fly-Tipping costing Councils £50m a year – incidents had increased by 4% 2015/16 to 936,000
- Community Action Team heads for Easington Colliery – a 10 week programme where local businesses and residents would work together to enhance the environment

**Resolved:** That the presentation be noted.

## **7 Work of the Community Action Team and the Use of Targeted Interventions**

The Committee considered the joint report of the Director of Transformation and Partnerships and the Corporate Director of Adult and Health Services which provided Members with an update on the work of the Council's Community Action Team (CAT) and the use of targeted interventions (for copy of report, see file of minutes).

Members received a presentation from the Senior Environmental Health Officer (for copy see file of minutes) which provided an update on the 2015-17 work and future work.

The Senior Environmental Health Officer confirmed that cases increased by 103% in 2016/17 compared to the 2015/16 Programme. There were approximately another 200 incidents to add which would take the number of cases to almost 1000.

In response to a question from Councillor May, the Senior Environmental Health Officer confirmed that both Eldon Lane and Grange Villa still showed signs of improvement on the revisit, however within the county there are areas with wider issues where work done made improvements for a short period of time only. These were usually areas of deprivation, with a wider problem of absentee landlords and empty properties as a result of the introduction of the under occupancy charge. Bin theft in some areas could add to the problem as the Council charged a replacement fee for which many people could not afford to pay.

In response to a question from Councillor Jewell regarding the identification of project locations, the Senior Environmental Health Officer confirmed that they would first consider the deprivation index and areas within the top 10% were included in the programme. In addition, the team would also consider intelligence from the police, fire service and anti-social behaviour teams. Councillor Jewell continued by querying whether the team worked in conjunction with the Councils Enforcement Team and the Senior Environmental Health Officer confirmed that an initial evidence gathering meeting would take place which would involve input from various internal and external teams, including Enforcement.

Councillor Clare queried which areas had been identified for the 2017-18 Programme and the Senior Environmental Health Officer confirmed that four areas had been selected, however one area was still undecided and was something which members could assist in identifying. The areas which had been identified were;

- New Kyo
- Wheatley Hill
- Dawdon
- CLS Central (revisit)

Councillor Liversedge queried whether more flexible opening hours of Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) would decrease the risk of fly-tipping, noting some centres that closed at 3.30pm and were not open on Fridays during winter. He continued that he had reported 13 fly-tipping incidents in his division in the weeks leading up to Christmas. Councillor Armstrong referred to the Councils Waste Strategy, which had been developed over several years and had been scrutinised by Members. The strategy had been formulated on the availability of finances to run the whole service and there was no additional funding that could be accessed. Councillor Stradling added that Members had been successful in keeping the site at Thornley open as it was being considered for closure. He confirmed that there were cases where waste had been dumped by the road after driving past the HWRC in Horden with a blatant disregard for it and he did not envisage that longer opening hours would assist in reducing the number of incidents. Councillor Armstrong suggested that the issue was referred to the Service Grouping for a response.

Councillor Milburn welcomed the news that New Kyo had been included in the programme for 2017/18 as although it was a small area, it affected surrounding areas such as Annfield Plain and the scheme would be of great benefit to the area.

Mr Bolton queried whether the CRM was used to monitor the performance of the programme, noting the number of incidents prior to and then following the programme. The Public Health & Housing Manager confirmed that the CRM was used to identify areas for the programme, however the main source of monitoring was undertaken during walkabouts which were undertaken 6, 9 and 12 months after the initial programme.

The Chairman confirmed that it was encouraging to see the CAT liaising with schools and young children as education was crucial if a long-term solution to the problem was to be sought.

### **Resolved**

That the report and presentation be noted and the Committee receive a further update on the work of the Community Action Team at a future meeting.

## **8 Review of the County Durham Environment Awards**

The Committee considered the joint report of the Director of Transformation and Partnerships and the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Local Services that provided Members with an overview of the development, progress and current processes of the County Durham Environmental Awards with a view to continuing to strengthen community, partner and Member engagement in its delivery (for copy of report, see file of minutes).

Members received a presentation from the Environment and Design Manager and Senior Design and Conservation Officer that focused on the aims, objectives, funding issues and promotion of the Environmental Awards in the County (for copy see file of minutes).

Councillor Armstrong confirmed that he had been involved with the Awards when they had first been established and they had strengthened and developed over the years into a fantastic scheme. He suggested that the presentation was sent to all Area Action Partnerships, as they would be able to assist in promoting the Awards scheme and in encouraging local community projects to participate.

Mr Bolton referred to funding and budget limitations and suggested that supermarkets were approached to assist with sponsorship as many had allocated funding for community schemes. The Chairman confirmed that her own local supermarket invested the proceeds from the sale of carrier bags, into local community projects. The Environment and Design Manager confirmed that most supermarket chains were approached annually and had sponsored past events, and so it would be worthwhile renewing those contacts to see if any current funding was available. Sponsorship was becoming increasingly difficult to attract as potential sponsors were looking for proof that sponsoring this event would result in an increase business.

Councillor May confirmed that he had been employed for a private company and part of his role was to consider requests for sponsorship. He confirmed that one of the main priorities to consider was what the company would gain from the sponsorship. He continued that he currently still met with a local business forum of an industrial estate and was aware that these took place in other localities, and could be an excellent platform to present information to.

Councillor Graham advised that Business Durham would be a useful point of contact as they had links with various business networks in the county, including business forums. The Environment and Design Manager confirmed that although his team was relatively small, they were willing to provide a presentation to business groups, although he confirmed that the time would be limited as promoting the scheme was only a small part of a role.

Councillor Jewell suggested that social media was used to its full potential in order to raise the profile of the campaign.

Councillor Kellet commented that Keepmoat was a northern-based housing company which could therefore perhaps provide sponsorship to the Awards. He continued by suggesting that all local housing providers in the County should be contacted.

Councillor Milburn queried whether Durham County Council had a policy on innovative design and the Environment and Design Manager confirmed that he was engaged in discussions with Planning colleagues to liaise on the development of schemes and ensuring focus on design standards.

## **Resolved**

That the report and presentation be noted.