

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Special Meeting of **Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham on **Friday 3 June 2016 at 9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor B Graham (Chairman)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors E Adam, J Armstrong, J Clare, G Holland, I Jewell, B Kellett, A Liversidge, P May, O Milburn, J Shuttleworth, P Stradling and L Taylor

Co-opted Members:

Mr T Bolton

Members of Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

Councillors D Boyes, J Charlton, C Hampson, S Iveson, J Maitland and J Turnbull

Co-opted Members:

Chief Fire Officer S Errington (Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service) and Mr J Welch

1 Apologies

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors D Bell, J Clark, J Gray, S Morrison, T Nearney, C Wilson and P Spurrell.

2 Substitute Members

There were no substitute members.

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 Environment Improvement Campaigns and Projects - Update

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting in particular the Members of the Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee who had been invited to the meeting for this agenda item.

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director Neighbourhood Services which provided Members with an update on the development and implementation of various environmental improvement campaigns and projects undertaken within the county.

The Neighbourhood Protection Manager and Senior Civic Pride Officer were in attendance and provided Members with detail of: the general aim and approach of the campaigns with most including education, engagement and enforcement; how Durham County Council works in partnership to deliver the various campaigns; the aim and outcomes of specific campaigns delivered including Responsible Dog Ownership; Big Spring Clean 2016; Litter from Cars; Fly Tipping and Operation 'Stop It'; the RHS Northumbria in Bloom and Britain in Bloom; Time Limited Projects consisting of various Community Clean-Ups and education programmes; Environment Awards 2015; Beautiful Durham Awards and work undertaken in partnership with Social Housing Providers (for copy of report and presentation, see file of minutes).

The Chairman thanked Officers for their very informative presentation and commented that most members had taken part in various litter picking events and some members had also contributed funding for the wild flower planting taking place on various roundabouts and verges in the County.

Councillor Milburn asked Officers if there were any laws in relation to dog fouling in cemeteries as she had received numerous complaints. The Neighbourhood Protection Manager responded that there is currently no specific restriction in relation to cemeteries however general enforcement powers can be used. The service could provide dog fouling signs/posters for display for the cemetery and that services is currently looking at using Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) in relation to dog fouling.

Mr T Bolton commented that Staindrop Parish Council had problems with dog fouling and asked if Durham County Council had a leaflet or notice on dog fouling that they could display on the parish notice board which included contact details to report dog fouling, a separate number rather than reporting it via the CRM system. He also commented that residents were not aware that litter bins could also be used for dog waste and could stickers be provided on bins to make people aware. The Neighbourhood Protection Manager responded that he could provide information for display on the Parish Council notice board and would be circulated to all Town and Parish Councils. In relation to the stickers they had been ordered and would be placed on all rubbish bins. The new CRM system will allow dog fouling to be reported via on-line forms which will then go directly to Neighbourhood Wardens for them to respond.

Councillor Boyes commented that a lot of good work had been done with regard to dog fouling which had showed good results but dog fouling was a big problem. He continued by highlighting that the Neighbourhood Wardens areas are continuing to increase in size and that a high percentage of dog fouling takes place outside of normal working hours with a requirement that the dog fouling has to be seen by the warden before prosecution can take

place as CCTV evidence cannot be used. Are there any stronger enforcement and prosecution powers available for use by wardens.

The Neighbourhood Protection Manager responded that if staff are provided with details of dog fouling incidents they do work outside of normal office hours on a voluntary basis. He advised that they could use CCTV provided it meets the relevant criteria as evidence for a prosecution and if a member of the public provided a statement and was willing to go to court then again this could be used for prosecution purposes. In addition, the service is looking at signs which illuminate on an evening as a deterrent to reduce dog fouling however they are expensive although evidence suggests they do reduce dog fouling when displayed. It was confirmed that the service had issued 160 warning letters to individuals.

Councillor Maitland referred to litter thrown from cars in particular at temporary traffic lights and asked if mobile cameras could be used to catch offenders. The Neighbourhood Protection Manager responded that there were some areas which were targeted and included traffic lights but CCTV was governed by the information commissioner and they needed someone to review the footage from CCTV in real time making it disproportionate amount of time. This is also a challenging process particularly in relation to getting a prosecution with the legislation meaning that the person that drops the litter is the one to be prosecuted not the keeper/owner of the vehicle.

Mr Welch referred to the public's interpretation of 'no dog' signs which they often thought included guide dogs and asked that the message be clearly given that the signs do not apply to guide dogs. Officers responded that guide dogs were exempt from 'no dog' signs and that as part of educating the public when engaging with local schools Durham County Council staff reinforce with children that guide dogs and dogs supporting those with disabilities are exempt from 'no dogs' signs.

Councillor Liversidge referred to the household waste recycling centres and commented that they close at 3.30 pm during the week and asked if this could be one of the causes of fly tipping and was it possible to extend the opening hours. He also commented that his Parish Council had two hot spots and they were looking into purchasing CCTV equipment.

The Head of Projects and Business Services responded that the type of people who use the household waste recycling centres should be members of the public and in 2012 when looking at reducing the opening hours of the Household Waste Recycling Centres there was concern about the potential impact on fly-tipping within the county. A number of detailed studies were undertaken and evidence suggested that there was no correlation between fly-tipping and the current opening hours at the Household Waste Recycling Centres. Fly-tipping tended to be the result of rogue traders rather than members of the public. They were currently looking at a system for small traders where the Council would get rid of their trade waste for a fee. Members of the public also had the option of a bulky waste collection, although there was a charge for this service.

Councillor May sought clarification if litter thrown from a vehicle is reported and the registration number provided could a letter be sent reminding the individual not to through litter from a vehicle.

Officers responded that this was not something that they did on a daily basis as they would need to identify the vehicle and the driver. To have a successful prosecution they would

need a full description of the driver and vehicle and a statement would have to be produced to enable the case to be taken to court. However, in relation to warning letter, officers would look into this and if a letter could be produced then they would look into this.

Councillor Stradling asked if any feedback was given to those who reported incidents. The Neighbourhood Protection Manager responded that if there was statement required then liaison would be ongoing but the feedback to general complaints was not there. Any prosecution would be publicised and feedback given.

The Head of Projects and Business Services responded that the new CRM system had a feedback loop.

The Chairman thanked Members of the Safer and Stronger Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their attendance.

Resolved: That the wide range of environmental campaigns aimed at promoting behavioural change and greater community involvement in the local environment be noted.

6 Waste Programme - Update

The Committee considered the Joint report of the Assistant Chief Executive and Corporate Director of Neighbourhood Services which provided members with supporting information in advance of the update on the waste programme (for copy of report, see file of minutes).

The Head of Projects and Business Services gave a presentation which provided members with an update on Garden Waste Subscriptions and Customer Interaction; Waste Transfer Station Capital Programme update and Station Grove Household Waste Recycling Centre Capital Programme update (for copy of slides, see file of minutes).

Councillor Holland sought clarification on the income versus costs for the garden waste service, in particular if this service was still subsidised.

The Head of Projects and Business Services responded that the service was still subsidised as the income was just under £1m but the cost of the service was £2m. The kerbside collection service for rubbish cost £76.00 per tonne and landfill was £85.00-£90.00 per tonne, recycling was up and down with the markets but currently cost £17.00 per tonne. If Durham County Council did not recycle at the kerbside then cost to the authority would be £3.5m more. Two years ago Durham County Council received an income from recycling.

Councillor May commented that the garden waste collection service had been extended as it stopped too early last year and this year collections would not stop until November. He then sought clarification on the cost of additional bins.

The Head of Projects and Business Services responded that there was no additional charge for the collection of additional bins however an additional bin would cost £25.00 then a further £20.00 for the sticker to enable the bin to be collected.

Councillor Clare congratulated the team on their response to missed bins which were dealt with quickly with a separate a visit made. He also supported the renewal of the recycling

contract and asked about the implications and what was acceptable to be placed in the recycling bin.

The Head of Projects and Business Services responded the contact was awarded to a local company who were O'Brien Waste Recycling Solutions and there would be no implications on what is currently placed in the recycling bin. The 'Bin it Right' campaign focused on educating local residents that nappies, food and dog waste should not be included in the recycling bins. Plastic bags were an issue but this had reduced as a result of the 5p charge for a bag.

The Chairman suggested a site visit by the Committee to the Energy from Waste facility at Haverton Hill. The Head of Projects and Business Services suggested that they could also visit the new recycling contactor.

Resolved: (i) That the waste programme update be noted.

(ii) That arrangements be made for Members to visit the Haverton Hill Plant and O'Brien Waste Recycling Solutions based at Washington.