

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 13 November 2017 at 9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor E Adam (Chair)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors D Bell, L Brown, J Clare, J Clark, A Gardner, P Howell, P Jopling, C Kay, R Manchester, C Martin, O Milburn, A Patterson, A Simpson and L Taylor

Co-opted Members:

Mr T Bolton and Mr D Kinch

1 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Carr, R Crute, P Sexton and M Wilson.

2 Substitute Members

No notification of Substitute Members had been received.

3 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 6 October 2017 were agreed as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

4 Declarations of Interest

There were no Declaration 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 - Update on Media Items

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer referred Members to recent press articles relating to the remit of Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The articles were:

- More acidic oceans 'will affect all sea life' – All sea life would be affected by carbon dioxide emissions from modern society making the oceans more acidic. The eight year study involving more than 250 scientists found that infant sea creatures would be especially harmed.
- Man sentenced for fly-tipping – A Bishop Auckland businessman had been fined after he gave waste to an unlicensed waste disposal service. Magistrates at Newton Aycliffe fined the man £330 and he was ordered to pay costs.
- Vote for Hardwick as UK's best park – Hardwick Park was one of 14 parks in the North East nominated in the best park category for this year's National Fields in Trust Awards. Residents were being asked to vote for the popular park to help it clinch the award.
- Council celebrates its 100th recycling and waste management talk – The Strategic Waste Management Team had celebrated giving its 100th talk within a year to schools and community groups. The team offered free talks and assemblies on recycling and waste management in County Durham.
- 'Operation Spruce up' shortlisted for award – Operation Spruce up had been shortlisted for the Local Government Chronicle Awards in the Environment Category. Winners will be announced in the New Year.

Resolved: That the presentation be noted.

7 Climate Change Strategy and Delivery Plan

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 details of progress made in relation to the County Durham Climate Change Strategy and Delivery Plan.

Members received a presentation from the Sustainability and Climate Change Team Leader and the Principal Climate Change Officer that provided Members with background to the strategy; the County Durham context and progress on actions in relation to the following: schools; transport; EU funding/business; communities; district heating and partnership working (for copy of report and presentation, see file of minutes).

The Chairman commented that a lot of excellent work linking to the climate change agenda had been done in County Durham and that a partner from Hungry was visiting Durham to see the BEEP project in operation which is considered an example of best practice.

The Chairman then asked how much impact CO₂ emissions had on climate change or whether the increase in temperature was a natural occurrence.

The Sustainability and Climate Change Team Leader responded that the temperature graph shown as part of the presentation, showed that the climate had changed. She continued that the way the media sells climate change often causes confusion. There is now a fast rise in carbon emissions due to the demands of our modern society which has resulted in our climate changing dramatically. In addition to climate change, there are also benefits to investing in sustainable energy and being fuel efficient such as clean air, reduced energy costs and greater national energy security.

Mr Bolton commented that Durham County Council is a major consumer of goods and services and asked whether carbon emissions was taken into consideration in the tendering process.

The Senior Climate Change Officer commented that DCC contracts include a strong sustainability element and gave the example that schools are given energy targets to be met when procuring white goods.

Councillor Clark referred to 90% of schools been supported by the Schools Carbon Reduction Programme and sought clarification on the remaining 10%, was this due to resources or lack of engagement.

The Sustainability and Climate Change Team Leader responded that some schools were academies and had decided to come out of Service Level Agreements with DCC. However, recently some had decided to return to DCC and bought into Service Level Agreements for the supply of energy. It was confirmed that officers from the School Carbon Reduction Programme visit those schools with Service Level Agreements to provide advice.

Councillor Clark then asked if the visits to the schools were low key. The Senior Climate Change Officer responded that it was up to each individual school as to how they engaged but each school was allocated a set number of hours.

Councillor Clark referred to a recent presentation she had received on fracking and asked if the Committee could receive an update on fracking at a future meeting.

The Sustainability and Climate Change Team Leader stated that fracking was a big challenge for North Yorkshire but there was none scheduled for Durham. She added that the geology within County Durham meant that it was not as viable a source of energy than in other parts of the country. The Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Manager referred to the presentation which had been provided to the committee which was delivered by Professor Jon Gluyas from Durham University. This related to Underground Coal Gasification (UCG) which involves a different process to fracking.

Councillor Kay was pleased that sustainable transport was part of the presentation and referred to the national cycleway and that there was no link from Bishop Auckland to Newton Aycliffe. He also commented on China and the USA in relation to increased carbon emissions, the USA pulling out of the Paris Agreement and the future impact on climate change.

The Chairman indicated that the Cycling Strategic Delivery Plan would be out to consultation early 2018 and would hopefully be published by mid-2018. The Principal Climate Change Officer advised that he would take the member's comment in relation to the lack of a cycle route link between Bishop Auckland and Newton Aycliffe back to DCC's Sustainable Travel Officer

In relation to the point made by the member concerning increased CO₂ emissions, the Principal Climate Change Officer informed members that China now has the biggest renewable energy programme in the world.

Councillor Jopling referred to the rising cost of energy and that the energy companies supplying energy to the UK were not British, with most energy being imported. She continued that in relation to the national grid, she had heard that if the supply generated is not used on a given period then it is still required to be paid for, can this energy not be stored and then used later?

The Principal Climate Change Officer responded that the main issue for the grid is balancing the energy produced from the various technologies currently available and that currently work is underway investigating the use of battery storage to store energy and then supply back to the grid at peak times. It was confirmed that the county council is looking at battery storage on council land.

Councillor Gardner referred to page 14 of the report paragraph 7 and the reference to the increase in emissions from cars and commented that people were not encouraged to car share or use alternative forms of transport. He himself had been forced to buy a car to meet his work commitments as due to changes in the bus timetable he could no longer use public transport to commute to and from work.

He then referred to wind turbines and that no new applications had been received since 2016 and was this a consequence of changes in relation to subsidies. He continued that in addition to energy there is a need to look at heat and that research had moved forward in the last 4/5 years with a lot of work done in the county in relation to the use of mine water as a possible heat source and made reference to mapping work undertaken of the mines in Spennymoor. This was a cheap sustainable energy source which would bring down the cost of electricity to consumers. He suggested that the Committee look at heat energy sources at a future meeting.

The Chairman indicated that in relation to the point made concerning the provision of public transport the local authority were unable to influence bus timetabling.

Councillor Patterson referred to wind farms and commented that no new sites had been approved due to changes in planning guidance and asked whether the Council was looking at sites that would have public approval in the county. She then referred to the unspent EU funding and if there were timescales and would there be any clawback. Also a lot of projects were relying on EU funding and how would the loss of EU funding following Brexit impact on those projects.

Officers responded that in relation to the changes in planning government guidance issued in 2016 indicated that wind turbines had to have community support and few applications go forward without a letter of objection, so it was difficult to propose development of a site knowing that there would be no objections. The Local Plan Preferred Options consultation would commence next year which would include a map of areas where there were least constraints, which could potentially be suitable for future wind farm development.

With regard to ERDF there was £13 million still available but it was very difficult to get compliant projects, the funding was from 2014-2020 and it would be government to get clarity from the EU as to what happens to the funding when we leave the EU. It is assumed that if the money is not spent then it will be lost.

Mr David Kinch made reference to the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIP) and asked whether the LCWIP would make reference to a walking and cycling route being introduced from Bishop Auckland to Barnard Castle along the old railway line. The officers responded that they would chase this up with the appropriate colleagues from the Sustainable Transport Team.

Mr Kinch continued by asking whether any work was taking place regarding wave power. The Sustainability and Climate Change Team Leader commented that the Durham coastline was not conducive to wave power projects. However companies are looking at wave power off the Northumberland coast at Blyth.. The Principal Climate Change Officer commented that wave power is both difficult and expensive in terms of return on investment and transporting the power produced to where it would be used. Tidal power is a much better prospect and a proposal for a barrage across the Severn estuary was mentioned.

Councillor Clare asked if the committee could receive an update on heat exchange technology.

The Sustainability and Climate Change Team Leader responded that heat exchange technology had been used in relation to projects using mine water in the county. The officer continued that air source heat pumps worked well in new builds but older properties were not suitable. Some houses in the County had heat pumps installed and they were currently looking at heat from river water.

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

ii) That the committee receive a further progress report on the Strategy and delivery plan at a future meeting.

8 Carbon Management Plan

The Committee considered the joint report of the Director of Transformation and Partnerships and Corporate Director of Regeneration and Local Services that provided Members with a progress report on the Carbon Management Plan.

Members received a presentation from the Senior Carbon Management Officer that focused on progress in 2016/17; projects delivered; on-going projects and future work (for copy of report and presentation, see file of minutes).

Councillor Jopling asked that in relation to projects and opportunities for savings from an energy perspective, in relation to the Inspire Programme, when will the cost of this programme be recouped. The Senior Carbon Management Officer responded that the Carbon Programme Board requires a maximum of 12 years payback.

Councillor Howell referred to the presentation on the reduction in CO₂ levels. He suggested that buildings that were no longer owned by the Council should not be accounted for as carbon reductions.

The Senior Carbon Management Officer responded that the council had reduced the number of depots and a number of schools had left the authority. He had done a

calculation which took these buildings out of the data and the reduction in emissions remained at the same level.

Councillor Howell then referred to the £1,719,349 financial savings since 2012 and commented that this was not shown in the table on page 4 of the report. The Sustainability and Climate Change Team Leader responded that the figures were obtained from the project management team and reassured the Member that the figures shown in the table were correct.

Mr Kinch asked about the National Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Strategy and whether this would include the Barnard Castle – Gaunless railway.

The Senior Carbon Management Officer responded that the LCWIP should be in place for the County Durham Plan.

Councillor Martin asked about the Inspire programme and the carbon footprint for County Hall, was the officer happy to see at some point in the future the building would be demolished and the site redeveloped.

The Senior Carbon Management Officer responded that the building from a carbon footprint perspective is not too bad however the design of new buildings are very carbon footprint conscious. He continued that the carbon footprint does not only relate to the building and that going forward the Inspire Programme provided new ways of working for employees such as providing the opportunity to reduce mileage to and from work.

Councillor Patterson continued that the Inspire programme is much bigger than just office accommodation and confirmed that one of the opportunities provided by the programme will be reduced business mileage. She continued by encouraging members to visit the Inspire Office located in County Hall.

The Chairman commented that he was surprised that the fleet had not been focused on more as he thought that the fleet would offer significant scope for future carbon reductions.

The Senior Carbon Management Officer responded that there is a need to give more attention to the fleet and how they have rationalised vehicles and journeys including looking at routes and business miles.

Councillor Gardner referred to street lighting and that developers did not install LED lighting initially so were the figures correct.

The Senior Carbon Management Officer advised Members that the Council only paid for the street lighting once the development had been adopted.

Councillor Gardner spoke about solar panels on council buildings in particular schools and asked whether projects in schools have a 12 year payback period. The Senior Carbon Management Officer commented that schools could become an academy at any time and any savings would go to the school.

Mr Bolton commented that the cost of electricity between 4.30 pm and 7.30 pm was often higher as this was classes as peak consumption times and that as he had off main line gas

he had opted for a boost at early evening and overnight, was peak consumption time still 4.30pm to 7.30pm.

The Senior Carbon Management Officer responded that consumption patterns have changed however 4.30pm – 7.30pm still remains the peak time and is charged at a higher rate.

The Chairman thanked Officers for the very informative reports and presentations.

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

ii) That the committee receive a further progress report as part of the committee's work programme for 2018/19.

9 Minutes from the County Durham Environment Partnership Board on 14 June and 13 September 2017

The Minutes from the County Durham Environment Partnership Board held on 14 June and 13 September 2017 were received by the Committee for information.