

## **DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL**

At a Meeting of **Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in Committee Room 2 - County Hall, Durham on **Tuesday 17 April 2018** at **9.30 am**

### **Present:**

**Councillor E Adam (Chair)**

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

Councillors O Milburn, B Avery, L Brown, J Carr, R Crute, C Kay, P Sexton and L Taylor

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

Mr D Kinch

## **1 Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Bell, J Clare, J Clark, A Gardner, P Howell, P Jopling, C Martin, A Patterson, A Simpson, M Wilson and S Zair.

## **2 Substitute Members**

No notification of Substitute Members had been received.

## **3 Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 8 March 2018 were agreed as a correct record and were 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 recent press articles relating to the remit of Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The articles were:

- Storm Tank aimed at stopping pollution in River Deerness approved – Following several sewer flooding incidents which had polluted the River Deerness and had been connected with the death of cattle from black's disease, Northumbrian water had approval to install a storm tank.
- Plans for plastic bottle deposit and return scheme put forward by Government in an bid to cut plastic waste – The move aims to boost recycling rates and cut litter and comes amid increasing concern over the issue of single use plastic waste, much of which ends up as rubbish polluting the countryside and oceans.
- European partners share energy efficiency ideas – partners across Europe have been sharing ideas on how to promote energy efficiency as part of a five year EU project. The REBUS project sees eight public authorities from countries across Europe come together to exchange ideas and good practice on how to make their buildings more energy efficient. This links to Agenda Item No.7.

Councillor Avery referred to plastic bottle deposits and advised Members that scientists were developing a plastic that would disintegrate. The Chairman responded that it was an enzyme that would break down the plastic but the article also states that the new plastic could not be put into the ocean.

Councillor Brown indicated that the enzyme eats the plastic and a way needed to be found to contain this.

The Chairman indicated that the single use plastics issue had been dealt with at the Council meeting and would come back to this committee in the future.

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

## **7 EU Funding and Other Funding for Low Carbon Projects**

Members considered the report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Local Services that informed Members about the latest development relating to European Funding and other funding for Low Carbon projects (for copy, see file of minutes).

The Sustainability and Climate Change Team Leader was in attendance to present a report and advised Members that she has received a letter yesterday confirming that the Council would continue in the current round of ESDF EU funding for the 2014-2020 programme, which in fact would continue until 2023.

The Council had received an award of £18 million in EU funding that was ring fenced for low carbon projects and the North East Region had received £80 million.

Members were updated on the three projects that had been approved in 2016, which were the Business Energy Efficiency Project (BEEP), LOCARBO and Rebus. Members were informed that the projects were going well.

The Sustainability and Climate Change Team Leader advised members of a new housing project, Solid Wall Insulation Innovation (SWII) and gave an example of works that had been done at Craghead. Properties had benefitted from external insulation that looked

similar to the original brickwork and suggested that members may want to view this project for themselves by way of a site visit.

Durham County Council were also involved in two further ERDF low carbon project bids that were currently seeking approval which were the Louisa Centre Minewater Project and Business Energy Efficiency Support (BEES) North East. The Louisa Minewater project would take heat from the mine water via heat exchanger and use it to heat both the building and the swimming pool. The Sustainability and Climate Change Team Leader advised that she had witnessed an example of similar work in the Netherlands.

Councillor Kay sought clarification if the Louisa Centre Project was geo thermal and the extraction of heat. The Officer confirmed that it was geo thermal and was the extraction of heat from underground sources.

Councillor Kay then asked for an update on the Eastgate project. The Officer responded that they had drilled down which confirmed that warm water was present under the site but Durham County Council did not own the land and there was nothing that could be done with the heat generated as there was no nearby housing estates. The heat could be used for an horticultural project for example, but the ERDF EU funding scheme would not fund such projects.

The Sustainability and Climate Change Team Leader suggested that County Durham was ripe for geothermal projects because of the old mines and advised that in Devon and Cornwall an initiative had been taken and were going ahead with sustainable heating projects. Often up to half of energy consumption is down to heating, however there was no magic solution and sustainable heating was a big challenge. In the relation to the Louisa Centre project the service is currently awaiting a decision on the outline bid and if this is successful a full bid will be written.

Members were advised of the Business Energy Efficiency Support project has been submitted for full approval. This is a bid led by Newcastle on behalf of Gateshead, Newcastle, North Tyneside, Northumberland and Sunderland Councils. If successful aims to help SMEs over the wider North East LEP area following the BEEP model.

The Officer then updated Members on Sustainable Transport there are plans for a sustainable transport for Durham City with departments across REAL service grouping looking at what can be done, such as electric vehicles, park and ride options, cycling and walking the project is in its early stages and a bid may be possible to be taken forward in the autumn.

Members were advised of the Regional Energy Commission and Hub, which is in its very early stages but funds have been allocated from Government to the LEP to fund an officer to develop a regional energy strategy.

Members were advised that the Leader had signed up to UK100 in 2015 which is a network of local government leaders who seek to devise and implement plans for the transition to clean energy which is 100% clean energy by 2050.

The Chairman referred to the BEEP project and asked if there had been a substantial increase in the take up from small to medium enterprises and if not was it a confidence issue with new technologies.

The Officer responded that they had done lots of work with SMEs and there had been a substantial increase in projects. The original guidance from government covered only basic areas with a small grant element that focused on energy assessment which was free. There only challenge was reaching out to and finding businesses. The guidance had now changed allowing projects to look at more innovative areas such as lighting and insulation and can offer a capacity grant and it is going well. The team was working on an information leaflet that pulls together all offers that are free at point of delivery and grants available. In relation to the North East LEP project the Sustainability and Climate Change Team Leader suggested that it may be more difficult to reach SMEs.

Mr Kinch referred to the SWII project and the high costs of solid wall installation and asked if the service held a list of authorised installers. The Officer advised Members that they did not keep a list but can confirm that having insulation in a stone built property makes a huge amount of difference to energy bills.

Councillor Kay referred to the division neighbouring his own that had received s106 monies for the construction of a biomass plant in Chilton and which they had difficulty spending due to the restrictions and was concerned that the monies were held by the Council and was looking for suggestions as to how the monies could be spent. He then referred to sustainable transport and as a keen cyclist himself, he thought Durham County Council could do better for cyclists. The journey from the Howlands Park and Ride for a cyclists was dreadful and that the National Cycle Network did not link up with Bishop Auckland. Councillor Kay explained that in Newcastle the council had introduced electric bikes and asked if Durham County Council had considered this.

The Sustainable and Climate Change Team Leader advised that this was a good idea and may be part of the project and was led by the Sustainable Travel Officer if the councillor wanted more information on the project.

The Officer responded that with regard to the S106 monies for Chilton this was passed to the community about a year ago and could now be used for energy efficiency.

The Chairman referred to the Chilton S106 monies and that the community had agreed to go ahead with smaller environment improvements and they had talked about district heating but the costs were too high. The Officer advised Members that Dalkia had pushed to get district heating installed but the housing developer would not put in the infrastructure.

Councillor Sexton asked if BEEP was open to charitable organisations and resident associations etc., The Officer responded that the project was ERDF funded, and was open to community interest companies but not resident trust companies and suggested that Councillor Sexton speak with her team for more information. However, the regional project does include these categories.

Councillor Milburn sought clarification if the Louisa Centre project was fully funded by ERDF. The Officer responded that the ERDF funding only covered 60% of the costs but it was financially viable. Councillor Milburn then referred to the SWII project work carried out

at Craghead which had instantly reduced the bills by a third and had made a huge difference to the people living in the properties.

Councillor Brown referred to sustainable transport and that Durham University were proposing to build a cycle path from Howlands into the city centre and increase the path width at Church Street to encourage students not to use cars.

Councillor Crute referred to the Regional Energy Policy Commission about accountability of the commission and of his concerns in relation to governance of the commission and how this would fit with regional issues and to be certain that issues are raised at the appropriate level.

The Sustainability and Climate Change Team Leader advised that it was early days for the Regional Energy Commission, she had been involved at an officer level and had been co-opted on to the group that was made up of 10/15 members including Durham and Newcastle universities and believed the right people had been included. In relation to governance of the commission she was unable to answer that question.

Councillor Crute advised that this was something that needed to be followed up on and could not recall it had been mentioned at regional level but we need to look at structures and bring back to a later meeting.

**Resolved:** (i) That the report be noted.

(ii) That the Committee receive further progress updates.

## **8 Regeneration and Local Services Quarter Three Revenue and Capital Outturn 2017/18**

The Committee considered the Joint Report of the Corporate Director of Resources and the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Local Services which set out details of the outturn budget position as at Quarter 3 for 2017/18 and highlighted major variances against revenue and capital budgets for the former Neighbourhood Services. The Finance Manager, Resources – Regeneration and Local Services, Phillip Curran gave a presentation (for copies, see file of minutes).

Councillor Sexton referred to the Gala Theatre overspend and asked for a breakdown of the figures.

The Officer responded that the overspend, was largely due to fallen sales but also events, however the service were keeping an eye on the Gala especially as two new cinemas were being built in the City and would impact in 2018/2019 and options would need to be considered.

The Chairman indicated that similar questions were raised at an earlier meeting and asked the officer what strategies were in place.

The Officer that there is a strategy looking to improve the situation over a year to eighteen months and that a private sector partner was found to change the programme but this had fallen through when they heard about the new cinemas. The Finance Manager continued

that the situation was still evolving and would obtain details of the strategies and update members at the next meeting.

The Chairman suggested this could be something that the Committee looked at as part of the work programme.

Mr Kinch sought clarification on the figures for the Culture and Sport forecast overspend. The Officer responded that the figures were correct and the figures included in the report were a highlight of variances as all variances of the service could not be listed.

Mr Kinch asked if he could be provided with the full details of the variances.

The Chair advised that the officers gave an overview of the figures it was not an error but is how the information is presented.

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

## **9 Quarter Three Performance Management Report**

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Management Team which presented progress against the Councils corporate performance framework for the Altogether Greener priority theme for the third quarter of the 2017/18 financial year (for copy of report, see file of minutes).

The Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Manager was in attendance to present the report.

Councillor Kay referred to page 22, paragraph 8 of the report in relation to the 2% increase on the last quarter of fly-tipping incidents and asked if there were particular spikes county wide. He then referred to his particular division which was inundated with fly-tipping and on two occasions personal details had been found with the rubbish which had been reported but no action had been taken which was disappointing as the community had reported the incidents to him but saw no outcome.

The Chairman advised that he had a similar situation with fly-tipping in his division where there was insufficient evidence for a prosecution to be brought, but the Neighbourhood Wardens would use as an opportunity to educate residents how to dispose of waste.

Councillor Kay then referred to a walk about with the MP in Coundon where they witnessed tyres been burnt which was an environmental hazard he continued that it was frustrating when members of the public provide information on incidents of fly tipping and nothing happens as that this could make people less inclined to help in the future.

The Officer responded that he could provide further information on fly-tipping to show trends and hotspots for the next meeting of the Committee.

The Chairman commented that the performance information only showed fly tipping incidents on Durham County Council's land and did not include fly-tipping incidents on private land.

Councillor Sexton enquired if the Council used statistics from County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service, which was confirmed. He continued that there were issues in rural areas and asked if Members could be provided with details of the areas covered by wardens and how many cameras are available for deployment in different areas. The Officer responded that he could provide Members with the information requested.

Mr Kinch advised of a farmer who found industrial grade tyres on land close to his farm that turned out to be council land and the incident was cleared within 24 hours and suggested that the system was working in the Dales even though there is only one warden working in this area.

The Chair reminded members of the size of the County and advised the neighbourhood wardens cannot be everywhere if incidents were reported they would be followed up.

Councillor Crute advised in relation to Wardens and cameras that there were inconsistencies across County Durham and this is largely a reactive service, it would be helpful to get information.

The Chairman reminded members of the strict rules in relation to deploying cameras and that the Council is not allowed to deploy cameras in public spaces.

Members discussed the deployment of CCTV cameras in particular that some were purchased by Members but then became the property of Durham Constabulary after a year.

Councillor Milburn asked if they were not two different schemes for the purchase of cameras whereby some remained the property of the council and others became the property of the police after a limited time period.

The Chair advised that if they were different purchases then they would be subject to different rules.

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

## **10 Refresh of the Work Programme**

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Transformation and Partnerships, which provided Members with information contained within the Council Plan 2016-2019, relevant to the work of Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This would allow members to refresh the Committee Work Programme to reflect the 3 objectives and subsequent outcomes identified within the Council Plan or 'Altogether Greener' theme (for copy see file of minutes).

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer presented the report and advised Members that the Committee would receive regular update reports from the Single Use Plastic Task Group. Members were invited to contact the Overview and Scrutiny Officers if they had any areas that they wished to be included in the future work programme.

The Chairman thanked Officers for all their work and time in putting the reports together and asked that the Committee's thanks be conveyed back to Officers.

**Resolved:** (i) That the information contained in the Altogether Greener priority theme of the Council Plan 2016-19 be noted.

(ii) That the Environment and Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee at its meeting in July 2018, receive a further report detailing the committee's work programme for 2018-2019.