

## **DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL**

At a Meeting of **Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in Committee Room 2 - County Hall, Durham on **Friday 12 July 2019 at 9.30 am**

**Present:**

**Councillor E Adam (Chair)**

**Members of the Committee:**

Councillors O Milburn, B Avery, L Brown, J Carr, B Coult, R Crute, S Dunn, J Higgins, P Howell, P Jopling, R Manchester, I McLean, A Simpson and M Wilson

**Co-opted Member:**

Mr T Bolton

### **1 Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A Batey, D Bell, A Gardner, K Hawley, L Maddison, P Sexton and Mrs P Holding.

### **2 Substitute Members**

Councillor P Jopling substituted for Councillor A Gardner.

### **3 Minutes**

The Minutes of the meetings held on 5 April 2019 and 30 April 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and were signed by the Chair subject to the deletion of the duplicate paragraph at the bottom of page 21.

The Chair advised Members that Legal Services had advised that the proposal for the inclusion of a Climate Change implication that was raised at the last meeting of the committee would be included within the appendices of the Climate Emergency Response update that would be considered at the County Council meeting to be held on 17 July 2019.

### **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 to recent press articles that fell within the remit of Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The articles were:

- Climate Change: UK government to commit to 2050 target – Greenhouse gas emissions in the UK would be cut to almost zero by 2050 under the terms of a new government plan to tackle climate change. The UK already had a target to reduce emissions by 80% but would now be amended to the new much tougher goal.
- County Durham road reopens following sinkhole – The B1404 Seaton Lane, which had to be closed following the discovery of a sinkhole had reopened after less than two weeks.
- Going green to keep Durham's streets clean – Durham County Council are trialling new electric cleaning equipment as part of its fight against climate change. Members of the Clean and Green Team had been using a new electric bin lift and road sweeper to empty the County's wheelie bins and clean its streets.
- Funding win will help restore County Durham woodland – A scheme that aims to improve County Durham's woodland had been awarded hundreds of thousands of pounds worth of funding. The Durham Woodland Revival project had been awarded £434,200 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to restore and reconnect woodland in the county. The funding would allow the Council to work with partners Woodland Trust, Northwoods, Wear Rivers Trust and the Forestry Commission to bring neglected and under-managed woodland back into good condition to boost woodland cover over a four-year period, starting this summer.

Councillor Carr asked for a map to show the areas of woodland covered under the project. The Overview and Scrutiny Officer responded that she would obtain a map to show the areas.

The Chair advised Members that there was going to be a climate change expo in the Durham Room at County Hall on 17 July 2019 to showcase services and technologies from across the region that were tackling climate change. There would be an opportunity to test drive fully electric vehicles and to look at a fully electric refuse collection vehicle.

Councillor Howell commented that the event had been promoted outside of the County and Darlington Borough Council members had been invited.

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

## 7 Strategic Cycling and Walking Delivery Plan

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Transformation and Partnerships that provided members with a progress update on the Strategic Walking and Cycling Delivery Plan (for copy of report, see file of minutes).

The Chair reminded Members that the Committee responded to the Strategy last year and highlighted some issues which were collated into a formal response that was fed into the consultation.

The Sustainable Travel Officer was in attendance to present the report and deliver a presentation that highlighted the following points:

- Vision and Aims – To make cycling and walking part of Durham’s culture and to make them safe, affordable, enjoyable, everyday modes of transport for everyone.
- Key Ambitions
  - Durham is widely recognised as a cycling and walking friendly County.
  - Durham has high quality cycling and walking networks that are safe, accessible, well maintained, integrated, signed, recorded and promoted.
  - More people, especially women, children and older people are cycling and walking for everyday journeys.
  - The quality of people’s lives, their fitness, health and wellbeing are improved.
- Building Blocks to create a cycling and walking County.
- Progress so Far
- DCC Staff Scheme
- Next Steps

The Sustainable Travel Officer advised that all demographic groups had been involved in the consultation and emphasised the links to climate change and the benefits for people to walk or cycle.

The delivery plan is set out under 3 Building Blocks. In Block 1, a huge piece of work had been done on the local cycling and walking infrastructure plans (LCWIPs) and this had recently gone out to tender. Members were informed that the initial LCWIP areas are Chester le Street, Durham and Newton Aycliffe.

Work had been done to establish evidence of use for the cycleways using automatic counters and a route user interceptor survey was recently carried out on NCN1 that asked users questions relating to the route. The results from the survey enable better understanding and a better picture to be built when planning improvements and seeking funding opportunities. In relation to DCC buildings and facilities members were advised that secure cycle storage was planned at both Spennymoor and Newton Aycliffe Leisure Centres.

Members were advised about the Great North Cycle Way that will run from Darlington to Northumberland covering almost 70 miles. The route will run from Blyth largely following the route of the A167 to Darlington. DCC was committed to building the cycle way with other local authorities.

Network Rail had carried out works with funding from DCC at Thickley Bridge to link to the Locomotion Way multi user route that links Shildon, Bishop Auckland and Newton Aycliffe.

Block 2 focuses on enforcement and members learned of work being done with Durham Police on the close pass campaign. Work was also ongoing in relation to signage.

Block 3 was about engaging, educating and promoting and information was given about the Love Reading, Love Cycling initiative that encourages greener modes of transport and active travel with reading. Belmont library had benefitted from the scheme with new cycle parking installed as well as the provision of the Bike Easy books and special bike seat covers. This would be rolled out to three other libraries in the County at Newton Hall, Shildon and Chester le Street this year. There was also the potential to work with Town and Parish Councils and had begun in Spennymoor and Shildon.

Information was given on positive work on how to behave on shared use paths and of DCC schemes for staff that include support to buy a bike and confidence training. A Sustainable Travel map has been completed for Crook and one will be completed for each strategic site. Members were advised that the new pool bike scheme would be available from August 2019.

Councillor Brown referred to the Great North Cycleway from Merryoaks to the Cock of the North which was wonderful but commented that the route from Merryoaks to Crossgate Moor was a shared use narrow pavement and sought clarification if there were any plans to improve this route.

The Sustainable Travel Officer responded that the works were phased as funding allowed. They were improving routes as well as creating new ones. The Strategic Travel Manager advised that Great North Cycleway was a commuting route and they needed to look at the design of the area and parts of the larger scheme. The section in question had not been addressed.

Councillor Brown asked where copies of the leaflets on cycle routes could be obtained.

The Sustainable Travel Officer advised Members that pdf copies were available on the council's website, but copies would shortly be available at Sports Centres and libraries. The Chair suggested that copies of the booklet should be made available in the members resource library.

Councillor Milburn asked if existing cycleways were on a maintenance plan.

The Sustainable Travel Officer responded that most railway paths are owned by Durham County Council but in some areas particularly in the East there were some complexities with ownership which made them difficult to manage and maintain. Durham County Council was working with partners to bid for funding so that the necessary improvements can be made.

The Strategic Traffic Manager advised that some areas of land were not in a good state and required investment. They were aware of the location of these areas of land and there was a list of cycleways that required investment and there were constant issues with maintenance.

The Chair referred to littering of the cycleways and asked if this had been taken into consideration when they had looked at the strategy.

Members were advised that littering was a maintenance issue and would be passed on to the relevant department. If Members had any particular areas of concern, he would pass this on to the relevant department.

The Chair inquired about ownership and how this impacted on maintenance and whether this was carried out as planned maintenance or was reactive. The Strategic Travel Manager that it was a mix of both that was dependent on resources.

Councillor Howell indicated that as a Councillor for Darlington Borough Council he had obtained a copy of the plans to build the Great North Cycleway and was interested how the two authorities would connect together.

The Sustainable Travel Officer responded that Darlington's build was as far as the A1 roundabout in Newton Aycliffe and works to construct the Great North Cycle Way in County Durham would connect up, though that stretch of the route has not been designed as yet.

Councillor Howell asked how they promoted the use of cycling and had they had conversations with Darlington Borough Council or other local authorities about their cycle ways.

The Sustainable Travel Officer responded that they had not worked with Darlington Borough Council recently but would when it was relevant. They work with other local authorities and were currently working with Sunderland City Council who had obtained funding through North East Combined Authority (NECA) for a cycleway from Hetton-le-Hole to Murton.

Councillor Coult asked if cycling was promoted to every school in County Durham as it was important to get the message out about the benefits of cycling at a young age and commented that it was great to see cyclists respecting the road although educating cyclists as well as motorists about road use and gave an example of some cyclists riding three abreast.

The Sustainable Travel Officer responded that they did not work directly with schools as this was carried out by the road safety team who provided Bikability training.

Councillor Jopling commented that this was a win-win for the council as there were numerous benefits including health benefits and benefits to the local economy and when she was in the hospitality trade a third of her business was from cyclists. It was good to teach and encourage school children about cycling as they loved riding bikes and in her area a training scheme had been put into place at Glenholme Park, and suggested that these schemes were good for Members to invest their financial assistance.

Councillor Dunn referred to the consultation, in particular asking if as part of the survey a question was asked in relation to connectivity of cycleways. He went on to advise that some cyclists did not cycle as routes are not all joined together which was a real issue. Croxdale and Hett Parish Council were keen to hear from the Sustainable Travel Officer as

they were concerned about logistical problems and if the resources would ever be available to complete and deliver the GNC. If the cycling route was to be made safe this would take resources but was an investment.

The Strategic Traffic Manager responded that the LCWIPs will determine what structures they currently had, what they needed and where were the demands. We have a lot of data in regard to infrastructure. The Local Transport Plan is funded annually and a significant proportion goes to cycling and walking. We must change the attitude of people to walk and cycle and create a demand.

The Sustainable Travel Officer indicated that the NCN1 survey had not specifically asked about connectivity and advised that 263 people took part in the survey and questions related to convenience, surface and attractiveness of route. Most of the cyclists that completed the survey were regular local users however some of the respondents were new to the area. The results from the survey were positive and quality principles were used in the questions.

The Chair asked if they had any influence on new builds such as industrial or business parks for installing cycle ways.

The Strategic Traffic Manager responded that all developments had constraints, but they needed to ensure they got the end results and were very pro-active.

The Chair thanked the Strategic Traffic Manager and the Sustainable Transport Officer for their attendance.

**Resolved:** That the report and presentation be noted and a further progress update report on the Cycling and Walking Delivery plan come to a future meeting.

## **8 Performance Management Quarter 4 2018/2019**

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Transformation and Partnerships that presented progress towards achieving the key outcomes of the Council's corporate performance framework (for copy of report, see file of minutes).

The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategic Manager was in attendance to present the report and outlined to the committee highlights of the final quarter 2018/2019 performance management report relating to environmental cleanliness, carbon emissions and recycling contamination issues and campaigns that are being done to address this

Following the presentation, the Chair indicated that there was a good proportion of positives, but they needed to keep checking as things can change in a small space of time.

Mr Bolton asked if more information could be provided on the council's authority to control bonfires.

The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategic Manager responded that he would make some enquiries and advise Mr Bolton accordingly.

Councillor Jopling indicated that she was pleased to hear the increase in the number of household waste e-permits issued but she still believed that some people were not aware of the e-permit system for vans.

The Chair responded that he was aware that the Council promoted the service in many ways but would ask for further information.

The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager advised the DCC did promote waste permits but not all publicity gets to all residents.

Councillor Avery referred to household recycling and contamination. In his area some education was required and asked if letters would be distributed to educate people or was it left up to the crew to catch the contamination. The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager advised that a sticker would be placed on every recycling bin advising No Black Bags and what could and could not be put into the bin. If residents do not take notice of this then the bin crews will carry out education with those residents concerned and enforcement would be the final response.

Councillor Howell referred to the data provided and that some of the data was out of date. He then referred to carbon emission which was a percentage that made it difficult to understand the significance and asked if this could be quoted in the number of tons instead of percentage. He then referred to the change in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from local authority operations which was 2 years out of date and in view of the council declaring a climate change emergency the data needed to be up to date.

The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategic Manager responded that the service was looking at the whole of the carbon emission measures and how the headline figure was broken down and that he would ask the team to take Councillor Howell's comments on board.

Councillor Howell reflected that if the council had declared a climate emergency then we need to get quicker at producing the figures so we can see the impacts of our actions.

The Chair advised that carbon measures would be looked at in greater detail.

Councillor Manchester sought clarification on graffiti incidents, in particular if the Council worked with private industries to help remove graffiti.

The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategic Manager responded that the Council had worked with private industries in the past to help remove graffiti.

Councillor Avery commented that in his areas the Council were straight out to remove the graffiti.

Councillor Crute referred to the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and asked if this could be broken down into partners, service and type so that they knew what to focus on for the work programme. He also asked that the figures be broken down so that they could establish the impact of vehicles idling on vulnerable people and added that this had been highlighted in other Overview and Scrutiny Committees too.

The Chair responded that the Air Quality report would be considered by the Committee at the meeting to be held on the 8 January 2020 and would include information on idling vehicles.

The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager advised that at the moment there were two carbon emissions indicators – DCC operations and across the county, there is a breakdown, so we know where the issues are from the countywide figure and need to work with partners. In relation to car idling the Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager informed members that the government were looking into tightening the regulations.

Councillor Coult referred to household recycling and how it was confusing what could go into which bin as different local authorities had different recycling rules and how there were no community recycling bins in villages and were there any plans to have these in place.

The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategic Manager indicated that the authority was currently tied into the waste recycling contracts that determine what types of plastic can and cannot be recycled and as these contracts came to an end the range of recycling products could be extended. He was aware that Darlington BC had twin litter bins at one time but on emptying the bin the waste and recycling were all mixed together. He was not aware if DCC had plans for public recycling bins to be located in villages, but he would make enquiries.

The Chair indicated that it was a failure of the public in not recycling properly that we do not have recycling bins in communities. Different authorities had different methods and materials for recycling and recent TV programmes had given out mixed messages about recycling that caused confusion relating to what the local authority does recycle. This committee was aware of a range of campaigns the service had carried out over the years to improve recycling including Know your Metals, Recycling Matters and Bin it Right and there was continuous education including engagement with schools that impacted on families learning to recycle via the children. A great amount of work had been done but it was a continuous process.

Mr Bolton referred to the visit to Stainton Grove household waste centre and if this centre was the template for all household waste centres then residents were well served.

Councillor Dunn referred to Germany and stated that thirty years ago there were recycling bins in German towns and cities and suggested it was about education. He indicated that the climate emergency was here, and they needed to turn people's opinions around about what can be recycled. National talks needed to take place with supermarkets as some foods did not need to be wrapped in plastic and all containers should be standardised so all authorities could recycle and process it.

Councillor Howell referred to the inconsistencies between councils recycling and commented that the government were considering consultation results in relation to co-ordination and alignment of recycling materials so all local authorities recycled the same.

He also made the point that contracts can be reviewed and we do not always have to wait until the end of a contract before considering amending them.

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

## 9 Refresh of the Work Programme

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Transformation and Partnerships that provided Members with an updated work programme for the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee for 2019-20 for their consideration (for copy of report, see file of minutes).

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer was in attendance to present the report and indicated that this was the second discussion by the Committee in relation to the future work programme for 2019/20 with the first discussion taking place at the April meeting. The table attached to the report had been developed following that discussion.

Members were advised that in addition to the scheduled meetings further meetings would be held focusing on:

- Fly-Tipping
- Spruce Up
- Air Quality
- Climate Emergency Response Plan
- Carbon Management Plan
- DCC Fleet Management
- Flood Risk Management Authorities
- Heritage Assets
- Heritage Coast

The following visits had been identified: Heritage Assets in March 2020 and Lanchester Wines in April/May 2020. Members may also wish to visit Woodland sites.

The Committee were asked to agree the work programme and identify a future area for focused work following the completion of the Allotment Services Review.

Members were advised to let the Overview and Scrutiny Officer know of any suggestions for a focused area of work, one suggestion was street lighting.

**Resolved:** (i) That the work programme for 2019-20 as set out be agreed.

(ii) That a topic for a focused scrutiny review be determined at a later date following the completion of the current review.

## 10 County Durham Environment Partnership Board Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting of the County Durham Environment Partnership Board held on 27 March 2018 were received by the Committee for information.