

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held remotely via Microsoft Teams on **Friday 19 March 2021 at 9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor E Adam (Chair)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors O Milburn, B Avery, A Batey, D Bell, L Brown, B Coult, R Crute, S Dunn, T Henderson, J Higgins, R Manchester, I McLean, A Simpson, P Sexton and M Wilson

Co-opted Members:

Mr T Bolton and Mrs P Holding

Also Present:

Councillors D Hall, A Hopgood, E Scott, M Wilkes and Mrs R Morris

Mrs R Morris – Co-opted Member of Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee

1 Apologies

An Apology for absence was received from Councillor C Kay.

2 Substitute Members

No notification of Substitute Members had been received.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 February 2021 were agreed as a correct record and would be signed by the Chair.

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 Impact of COVID 19 on Neighbourhoods and Climate Change Service Grouping

Members of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been invited to attend the meeting for this agenda item.

Members considered the report of the Corporate Director for Neighbourhoods and Climate Change that provided Members with an update in the actions that the teams within Neighbourhoods and Climate Change had taken, working with partners to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic (for copy of report, see file of minutes).

The Corporate Director for Neighbourhoods and Climate Change was in attendance to present the report and deliver a presentation (for copy of presentation, see file of minutes).

The presentation set out details of Refuse and Recycling; Parks and Open Spaces; Impact on Bereavement Services; Community Protection; Technical Services and the Government Roadmap.

Members were advised that Refuse and Recycling was the most important service for them to keep going during the pandemic which they had achieved. It was a key priority for the service to ensure that bins were emptied. Social distancing measures had necessitated that more vehicles were used which had an effect on the productivity of the service, but it had remained operational throughout the pandemic. The Garden waste service was disrupted during the first lockdown and a month of service was missed and this had been recognised in the price of the service being reduced for those signing up to the service for 2021, again to compensate for the service reduction last year. The Garden Waste service had operated on a Saturday and Monday during 2020 but would return to the usual collection days of Tuesday to Friday in 2021.

The Corporate Director highlighted that Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) continue to be extremely busy and had social distancing measures in place which had led to traffic management plans in operation at some Household Waste Recycling Centres to ensure road safety. He confirmed that this had resulted in queues at some Household Waste Recycling Centres and the service was looking to address this with the introduction of a live tracking feed for residents to access via the Durham County Council website prior to heading out to a Household Waste Recycling Centre to check the levels of the queues. The service was also looking at trialling a booking system for Household Waste Recycling Centres. Members were reminded that work on multi local authority waste procurement was

also progressing. The Corporate Director highlighted to members that at the beginning of the pandemic it had been necessary to remove some play equipment from various parks to encourage social distancing and that the equipment would be replaced when it is safe to do so. The cafes at Hardwick and Wharton parks were closed but would reopen for a takeaway only service and all toilets in parks were open for those using the parks for exercise.

Members were advised of the work of bereavement service throughout the pandemic and that in order to maintain the service staff from other areas had been redeployed to provide support. The service had retained the capacity to cope during the pandemic whilst providing a sensitive service but had also experienced technical issues relating to cremators which were having to be managed by staff.

Members were also advised that the government had just announced further monies available for the Safer Street initiative and the council would be trying to access the money, so that further work could be undertaken around the county.

The big issue with Technical Services was coping with the hardest winter maintenance season that they had seen for a number of years. In higher parts of the county crews dealt with substantial snow fall while at a lower level crews dealt with issues of ice. This was not just the length of the cold weather but also the variation between some cold weather then some very warm weather creating freeze thaw situations, that were difficult to manage. The Service had focused winter maintenance measures to ensure that all GP surgeries, testing centres and vaccination centres were kept clear. An update was given in relation to the work that was continuing on New Elvet Bridge and it was confirmed that Witton Park Bridge was now open to the public.

The Corporate Director then referred to the four-step roadmap out of lockdown that the Corporate Management Team were looking at closely. Government had not produced any draft legislation or government guidance for each of the steps other than the general guidance. The rule of six would apply again on the 29 March 2021 that would have an impact on the service. They would be able to start supporting a limited number of community activities as they had missed some activities such as the big spring clean and community litter picks. Step 2 of the roadmap would be a busy stage for the community protection team as this was when outdoor hospitality would be allowed and the licensing teams would be working closely with licensed premises, they would also see indoor leisure return. Step 3 of the roadmap allowed indoor hospitality so there would be a lot of work to do with businesses to get this right and planning for a spike in town centre issues such as litter and community protection. The fourth step of the roadmap would hopefully see the removal of most of the controls.

The Chair thanked the Corporate Director for his presentation and indicated that it had been a difficult and very unusual year that had brought many challenges for staff and the corporate team, but overall the situation had been handled very well.

He asked that thanks be conveyed to staff for their hard work and the effort they had put in.

Councillor Wilkes thanked the Corporate Director for all his work and commented that there were a number of officers behind the scenes who were working extraordinary hours beyond the normal hours you would expect someone to have to work. He then referred to the access to GP surgeries and advised that for surgeries in his area gritting had not taken place and this had resulted in himself and residents gritting the roads and he asked why this wasn't the case for some other areas in the county. He also commented on the proposed booking system for the Household Waste Recycling Centres and the use and cost of traffic management system at the Household Waste Recycling Centres and asked if a booking system could not have been introduced earlier. He continued by commenting that last year he had asked if a booking system could be introduced for the household waste recycling centres as it would be cheaper and more sensible with less queuing and highlighted that he was aware that other local authorities had introduced a queuing system. He commented that during lockdown the amount of recycling had increased so people were using the household waste recycling centres as they could not get everything into their recycling bins. However, due to the size of the queues at the household waste recycling centres people were using alternatives such as recycling stations at supermarkets for instance and gave the example of Sainsburys at the Arnison Centre where the recycling facilities had been overflowing since last year. He had asked officers if some temporary recycling facilities could be made available to assist the public and reduce the problems at the household waste recycling centres and noted that Sainsburys at the Arnison Centre had spent a considerable amount of money to remove the waste deposited at their facility.

The Corporate Director for Neighbourhoods and Climate Change thanked Councillor Wilkes for his appreciative comments and the priority had been to keep these services going and commented that the supply chains for the recycling centres were still not back to normal. He then referred to the gritting of GP surgeries and advised that they had a priority footpath schedule that was agreed with public health and the NHS so he did not understand why the GP surgery mentioned was not on that priority list and would pick this up outside of the meeting. With reference to the household waste recycling centres consideration was given to a booking system last year and an assessment was made but indicated that there would be little benefit due to the size and number of Household Waste Recycling Centres. Durham County Council was in a different position to other local authorities in the area who only had one or two household recycling centres. Other authorities who had a similar geography to Durham and a similar household waste recycling network had followed the same path as Durham. The number of sites where they had to have traffic management restrictions related to the highway such as Potterhouse Lane, Seaham and Annfield Plain where the queues risked interfering with the highway and traffic management was put into place to ensure the safety of the highway and its users. When social distancing requirements reduce, they hoped that the necessity to protect the highway from queuing would reduce.

The Chair referred to the difficult situation around household waste recycling centres and the work done to keep the service open was very well planned and commented that some Local Authorities that had a booking system had still experienced queues.

Councillor Wilkes indicated that in relation to the gritting at GP surgeries that the footpaths at the GP surgeries in his area had been gritted, it was the access roads to them that had not been gritted.

Councillor Sexton also wished to thank the teams and referred to traffic management costs and asked if it was legislation which required that the traffic management schemes were manned and suggested the use of a static barrier to stop traffic. He also asked apart from the booking system what other strategies had the service considered.

The Corporate Director for Neighbourhoods and Climate Change responded that in Chester-Le-Street they had reopened the Hett Hills site for extended hours which would reduce the pressure on other local Household Waste Recycling Centres and that this site was now open seven days a week instead of weekends and bank holidays. The nature of the traffic management at Potterhouse Lane Household Waste Recycling Centre was that it was to assist with traffic movements and it was not possible for a permanent barrier across the road as vehicles still needed to use that road to service the site during working hours which was the reason why it had to be manned.

Councillor Sexton wished to confirm that the road closures were legislative and asked why the vehicles that serviced the site could not use the diversion to access the site.

The Corporate Director for Neighbourhoods and Climate Change confirmed that Highways legislation states that the local authority has a duty to protect the highway. He referred to Potterhouse Lane site and stated that the vehicles that service the site cannot use the diversion as they are heavy good vehicles and the diversion route was inappropriate for this type of vehicle.

Councillor Avery wished to thank the Corporate Director for Neighbourhoods and Climate Change and his team for their fantastic work during this difficult period in particular the bin crews.

The Corporate Director for Neighbourhoods and Climate Change thanked Councillor Avery for his words and commented that it had been a massive team effort across the service.

Councillor Dunn echoed Councillor Avery's comments regarding the bin crews who had been outstanding. He commented that the need for the household waste

recycling centres and the use of them had increased massively through the pandemic. He disagreed with the comments regarding the traffic management system as the Coxhoe site was located on a 60-mph windy road and had large queues. The traffic management system used had prevented accidents and protected road users and staff and he believed that the measures in place, certainly at his local centre were absolutely necessary. The queues were still large and welcomed the live feed tracking system on the website to show how busy the centres were and thanked all those involved.

The Corporate Director for Neighbourhoods and Climate Change thanked Councillor Dunn for his comments. He indicated that the council have 12 sites across the county all in different positions and in the past they have had many challenges managing the sites due to historical issues resulting from a wide and diverse estate when it comes to the recycling centres and that traffic management was put in place to ensure highway safety.

The Chair indicated that all members appreciated the work and effort that had been accomplished by the teams over the past twelve months and wished to show their appreciation from this committee to those staff as well as the corporate team.

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

(ii) That a further update be included in the 2021/22 work programme.

7 Climate Emergency Response Plan - Year 1 Update

Members of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been invited to attend the meeting for this agenda item.

Members considered the report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change that provided Members with an annual update on progress of the actions within the Climate Emergency Response Plan including an assessment of the impact of COVID-19 had on the Council's and county wide carbon emissions (for copy of report, see file of minutes).

The Principal Officer – Low Carbon Economy and the Carbon and Energy Analyst – Low Carbon Economy were in attendance to present the report and deliver a presentation (for copy of presentation, see file of minutes).

The presentation set out details of the Council Emissions and Targets; County Emissions and Targets; Council and Countywide Actions: Looking Ahead and the new Corporate Environmental Statement (for copy of presentation, see file of minutes).

The Carbon and Energy Analyst provided detail of the Council's emission targets, the levels of emissions from Durham County Council which were reducing and

looking forward to the future, a target of 70% reduction in emissions was planned for five years' time and an 80% reduction by 2030. Members were advised that the major sources of Durham County Council's emissions were Heat, Electricity and Travel and the service needed to keep on track in relation to emissions by monitoring and targeting support.

She continued by confirming the percentage emissions, in relation to transport (21%), Electricity (35%) and Heat (44%). Transport was the smallest percentage and can be reduced with simple steps such as moving to remote meetings and swapping fossil fuel transport for ultra-low emission vehicles or electric vehicles. Work was continuing to reduce the percentage further with the introduction of the use of electric vehicles. Electricity had the second highest percentage of emissions in relation to Durham County Council's carbon footprint, as we move forward we will use more electricity with the greater use of electric vehicles and using electric heating but the footprint of electricity used would reduce as the national grid moves to more renewable generation moving away from fossil fuel generation. Heat which had the largest percentage of emissions of Durham County Council's carbon footprint at 44%, with 43% of that footprint from the use of gas heating and 1% from oil heating to heat Durham County Council buildings and it was highlighted that this is-the biggest issue for the authority.

Members were provided with details of the council emission reductions by service area. The largest reductions to Durham County Council emissions was from street lighting, the Street Lighting Energy Reduction Project (SLERP) which had reduced both the amount of energy being consumed from the grid and carbon emissions.

Countywide emissions were more difficult to achieve as there was less control and the Principal Officer advised that Durham County Council had set a target of 60% reduction by 2020. However, this data would not be available until 2022 due to national time lags in processing the data. Current data indicates that in 2018 the countywide emissions were 54%. It is hoped with the help of Government, Businesses and the public that we can improve on the 2050 target. Members were advised of aspirational targets of 82% by 2030 and 95% by 2040.

The progress made between 2019-20 saw a 16% reduction in Electricity due to decarbonisation of the grid and actions by Durham County Council had led to reductions in the Council's emissions such as retrofit LED lighting in schools and other Durham County Council buildings such as the new headquarters. Although the emissions had risen for heat with a 5% increase which was largely due to weather conditions, for example if there was a cold winter then it was likely we would use more heat. However, work was being done to install air source heat pumps in Durham County Council buildings where possible. Transport had an 11% reduction in emissions, the council had trialled the use of an electric refuse collection vehicle that had been successful and was leading to the purchase of an electric vehicle. Remote working had also been successful in limiting the amount of transport and

there is an expectation that transport emissions would have dropped significantly in the last twelve months.

Members were provided with details in relation to countywide emission reductions, projects in Housing Regeneration such as the Solid Wall Insulation Initiative and the Warms Homes Fund off gas heating systems; transport related projects such as the work being done to install electric vehicle charging points in rural areas and work in the natural environment such as the Woodland Revival project to plant 64 hectares of trees and restoration of the Peatlands were all reducing the County's carbon footprint. The Principal Officer highlighted that in relation to the restoration of peatlands this was not recorded as a carbon saving by national data. Durham County Council along with other local authorities have highlighted this to the government. Members were reminded of the work carried out to aid Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs) through the Business Energy Efficient Projects (BEEP); there was work being done in the east of the county where the team were working with private organisations to use minewater to heat homes and of a business case being developed for the Durham City District Heating proposal.

There had been 44% of the county's waste reused, recycled or composted and there was success in the Single Use Plastic pledge. Members were advised of various schemes and projects planned for 2021 such as further tree planting, oyster farms; electric vehicle schemes such as try before you buy which was targeting SMEs but Durham County Council would also take advantage of this scheme. Members were advised that one of the key areas to come from the consultation was the necessity of continuous awareness raising and a new website was launched to address this.

Looking ahead to 2021 for the reduction of Durham County Council emissions, work is continuing on a Zero carbon emission depot; the use of air source heat pumps; the use of electric vehicles where possible in Durham County Council fleet; the Low Carbon Team was involved in the leisure centre transformation programme. In relation to monitoring Durham County Council was looking to improve its Building Energy Management System across its estate which would assist in fault finding and ultimately for repairs to be carried out remotely.

Members were advised of the Environment Strategy based on the Environmental Statement report that was agreed by Cabinet at its February 2021 meeting. A draft action plan for the Environmental Statement has been put together with the involvement of senior managers across the Council.

The Chair thanked the officers for their comprehensive report and presentation and advised that Members could see the variety of work that needed to be done to progress the actions within the Climate Emergency Response Plan. He also thanked the team for their hard work to make sure the council could deliver on the targets that the council had set, he looked forward to the new 2022-24 plan.

The Chair then referred to the report in relation to e-cargo and asked for an explanation of what this was as he had not heard of this previously. He then referred to the graph at paragraph 28 in regard to reducing carbon emissions and commented that transport was an issue, although the council were making huge improvements, he was concerned of the wider aspect in terms of industry and heavy goods vehicles and busses and asked what work could be undertaken to help reduce emissions.

The Principal Officer responded that e-cargo was an initiative to deliver the last mile of a journey using a bicycle they started to look at this scheme before the pandemic and Newcastle City Council had a similar scheme that they ran in conjunction with the NHS and ZED move where blood and tissue tests were taken from the Royal Victoria Infirmary to the Centre for Life using electric bikes and cargo bikes. In County Durham, colleagues from the Sustainable Transport had initiated an e-cargo trial in Durham City working with the market traders to deliver produce to customers living in a radius of two miles from the city centre. He would speak to the Sustainable Transport team to ascertain if the pilot had been successful and update members. In relation to the Chair's question regarding transport the service expected the price of electric cars to be equal to that of petrol cars by 2025 as demand increased. Vans and heavy good vehicles were more difficult as the vehicles were more expensive but other local authorities had taken a significant lead on this such as Manchester City Council who had purchased 27 electric Refuse Collection Vehicles (RCVs), but they were an urban authority who had shorter collection routes. The Council had done some mapping work and commented that the RCV that was trialled had been successful on all routes. Coventry City Council were hoping to be one of the first cities outside of London to have all electric buses. Electric vehicles were more expensive, but prices were reducing.

The Carbon and Energy Analyst added that the new bus station in Durham City would have cables installed to support electric buses.

Mrs Morris welcomed the update and the developments around the plan and targets and commented that detailed delivery plans were needed but raised concerns regarding other 'players' that she hoped the council would be able to bring into the plans such as industry, schools and highlighted that young people would need the necessary skills to support this sector in the future. She asked given that the target for electric cars by 2030, if Durham was going to hit this target then the infrastructure would need to be in place and commented that a target of 100 vehicle charging points would not be adequate for the demand generated and would everyone have access to charging points for their vehicles. She also referred to the servicing of electric vehicles and that currently the skills needed to service electric vehicles were not quite there and suggested this was a skills growth area for the future.

Mrs Morris then asked what was being done to meet recycling targets and if there was going to be a substantial reduction in incineration and landfill in favour of

recycling as she had concerns around incineration projects and the CO₂ emissions that were generated from the incineration process which were often higher than the emissions from burning coal. Was the council working to a target of no more incineration or landfill.

The Principal Officer agreed that in terms of electric vehicles there was a skills gap and these skills were essential to the green revolution. There was already a number of further education colleges that had shown an interest in developing new programmes for the manufacturing of air source heat pumps and highlighted that these skills were key in the future workforce. In reference to charge points for electric vehicles, the Principal Officer indicated through the Scaling on Street Charging Infrastructure (SOSCI) project 100 electric vehicle posts had been erected with each post having two charging points. Durham County Council were installing charging points at its depots and buildings and the authority has worked closely with Northern Power Grid (NPG) to ensure they have capacity to accommodate all the additional charging points. The infrastructure was key, as the grid was going to be under tremendous pressure which could be mitigated through increased battery storage. Northern Power grid and the Network Distribution Operator (NDO) in our area were all consulting very widely and very closely with all local authorities and they had assurances that there were no issues. The Principal Officer indicated that there were also private charge point operators in operation.

The Corporate Director for Neighbourhoods and Climate Change added that Mrs Morris had raised some interesting points and indicated that by 2030 petrol and diesel cars would no longer be sold as new cars and when you consider the network of fuel stations and think how that was going to be replaced, there was still a long way to go. This was both national and international and Durham County Council would do what it could when opportunities came along and continue to further develop the network over the next eight to nine years. In terms of the recycling the Corporate Director advised that the authority was doing everything it could to maximise recycling and were waiting for the Environment Bill to go through parliament that would put new duties on county councils and waste collection authorities and disposal authorities and provide the funding and infrastructure to support these new duties. He continued that he hoped that this would take a lot of the biodegradable materials out of the waste treatment process and help increase recycling. There would always be residual waste left over which needs to be dealt with and there is a lot of discussion concerning whether burning to create energy was the right thing to do. The council were working with several other local authorities in the region to procure a new residual waste disposal facility that had been planned to take account of all the additional recycling measures that were coming through in the Environment Bill, so they would be minimising the amount of residual waste that would go through that plant with all seven authorities having huge commitments to increase recycling and to reduce residual waste and ensure that the waste management system was sustainable.

Councillor Wilkes referred to Appendix two of the report and was delighted that Abbey Leisure Centre was to benefit from both solar panels on the roof and a new air source heat pump system. This was brilliant news and would assist with the leisure centre becoming almost carbon neutral. He thanked the team for their effort and time in putting together the bid to receive the funding. He then referred to school buildings and the backlog of repairs and maintenance with only a small rebuild programme and asked to what extent could the Council's carbon footprint be reduced by installing energy efficient systems in schools and if there were opportunities for match funding to be acquired if the Council put in additional funding.

The Chair added that this was a valid point and that support was needed to attract funding to help with the maintenance of school buildings and it was additionally difficult to track funding because in most cases it was usually done on a bidding process.

The Principal Officer responded that schools accounted for 44% of Durham County Council's building emissions so anytime a building was undergoing a retrofit for lighting, roofing or heating it was important that the Low Carbon Team were involved as early as possible to investigate if there was the opportunity to embed low carbon elements and gave an example of a school in the county that was due for heating replacement with an air-source heat pump that would reduce CO₂ emissions however this would also require additional funding. The Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme had funding available and that Durham County Council had requested funding for seven projects and had been successful in obtaining three lots of funding. They had been informed yesterday that there was going to be further funding available with submissions by 7 April 2020 and projects completed by March 2022 which were 100% funding and that the Service would do their best to maximise this funding.

Councillor Wilkes suggested that additional funding was put forward so that where work was being done the Low Carbon Team were involved to see where or what else could be done at that time and not to install new systems such as gas central heating boilers that would need to be taken out after only a couple of years to meet government targets. He continued that if the authority could put money towards the government budget, they could make a huge difference and save money for the schools.

The Chair indicated that this would be taken forward to the appropriate body to investigate this.

Councillor L Brown thanked officers for their presentation and was pleased that carbon reduction was on track. She expressed her disappointment that the photovoltaic cells on the rooftop of the new headquarters were an afterthought and the new office block at Aykley Heads did not meet British Research Establishment

Environment Assessment Method (BREEAM) standards and was worried about the commitment from Durham County Council to carbon reduction.

The Chair commented that members had seen the council's commitment to carbon reduction as Councillor Brown had commented on the excellent report. Everyone could look at small projects and think we could have done better but improvements were being made and solar panels would be on the new headquarters.

The Principal Officer responded that the team would be looking to maximise low carbon opportunities throughout the rest of the Aykley Heads site, but he could not comment on particular projects. He indicated that BREEAM was included in the County Durham Plan.

Councillor Sexton echoed other members sentiments about all the hard work that had gone into the plan and that this was fantastic given the size of the team. He indicated that they needed a clear and transparent plan to track progress and what effect this would have on delivery timescales. He then referred to cycling in County Durham specifically the new bollards on cycle lanes and suggested that the bollards attracted an accumulation of debris and detritus around them and around drains and gullies; he also highlighted the issue of needing to avoid subsiding drains when cycling but because of the bollards you could not move out of the way and asked if there was a machine to clean around the bollards and the drains and gullies. He also referred to the electric vehicle charging points in the SOSCI scheme, highlighting that in his ward he had a concentration of about 900 homes without garages or driveways and suggested that officers should consider the location of some charging points as they may not get used if they were located in the more remote parts of the county.

The Principal Officer responded that in relation to charging points it was an issue but there were different options that some local authorities had taken including cabling or ducting over pavements or utilising streetlights. Durham County Council had looked at various options and adopted the Charge Point Delivery Plan. There were a number of fast charging points, but they were towards the main highway network and the SOSCI project was partly based on cost and if the cost to get to the network was too expensive it would not proceed. The authority is looking to install charging points in some Durham County Council car parks and some social housing car parks too. It was more difficult to install charging points on land that was not owned by the council.

The Corporate Director for Neighbourhoods and Climate Change indicated that the highways team had been looking at the issue of houses that don't have drives and how they would get the cables across the pavements from the house to the car. Some authorities had introduced licensing schemes where you paid a fee that sometimes included a cable guard. This issue did not just affect Durham and had been taken to the Regional Highways Group who were looking across the region to ensure local authorities in the region worked in harmony on this and they did not want different regimes which would be negative against electric vehicles. In terms of

the bollards he advised members that the bollards were installed to encourage active travel during the pandemic and had to be installed quickly as the funding was only available for a number of weeks and were not long term planned pieces of cycling infrastructure. They would have other projects that would improve the cycling infrastructure across the county.

Councillor Avery referred to the Street Lighting Energy Reduction Project (SLERP) in particular the removal of columns on housing estates which had resulted in these areas now being dark. He asked what could be done to improve the illumination of the lights.

The Principal Officer advised that this would be passed over to street lighting colleagues.

Councillor Crute indicated that he was going to raise street lighting under the work programme agenda item. He continued that there is a need for the committee to look at the effects of the SLERP. This project had worked well to the extent that it had produced huge dividends in energy reduction but there was a need to look at any unintended consequences. He added that there is in the current climate a need to look at the impact of the removal of columns in urban areas but specifically in relation to rural areas where columns have been removed on roads connecting villages. This could also be picked up by Safer and Stronger Overview and Scrutiny Committee or Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Chair agreed that this was something that could be raised under the Work Programme item.

Councillor Hall referred to the launch of the forthcoming website mentioned in the presentation that was welcomed as a number of residents had asked him what they could do as local residents, and for detail of what the council is doing to encourage residents to reduce carbon emissions. He commented that the CO₂ targets were extremely important but alongside that there were opportunities to potentially increase community resilience by making sure households and businesses had affordable heat and energy. There was an opportunity for the forthcoming planning process to include this alongside the CO₂ targets and look at the practical benefits for local communities and businesses that could be achieved through certain projects at the same time.

The Principal Officer responded that the website was intended to be a community website and would be focused on what local communities and businesses were doing so would include things such as case studies, it would also have links to Durham County Council's corporate website in relation to what the Low Carbon Team were doing.

Resolved: (i) That the progress made against the delivering of the first year of the Climate Change Emergency Response Plan and the forecast drop in Council emissions, magnified by the influence of COVID-19 across the estate be noted.

(ii) That members received a further update report in 2021/22 on the progress made against delivering the actions of the Climate Emergency Response Plan.

8 Quarter 3 2020/21 - Revenue and Capital Outturn

The Committee considered the Joint Report of the Interim Corporate Director of Resources (Interim) and Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change which set out details of the forecast outturn budget position for the service area. The report highlighted and explained any major variances in comparison with the budget, based on the position to the end of Quarter 3.

The Finance Manager, Neighbourhoods and Climate Change was in attendance to present the report and gave a presentation (for copy of report and presentation, see file of minutes).

Councillor Wilkes asked for an explanation of £1.33 million going back into reserves and suggested that rather than going into reserves it should be spent and asked if the government were fully covering COVID costs in relation to this Service Grouping.

The Finance Manager referred to the £1.33 million underspend and explained that this would go into a cash limit reserve for Neighbourhoods so would be carried forward to be used for initiatives that were specific to that service. Some of the overspend related to Culture and Sport so that would go into the Regeneration, Economy and Growth cash reserve. In terms of the COVID costs, the costs for this service were being covered.

Resolved: That the contents of the report be noted

9 Quarter 3 2020/2021 - Performance Management Report

The Committee considered the report of the Interim Corporate Director of Resources (Interim) that presented the 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 Strategy Manager was in attendance to present the report.

He reported that overall environment cleanliness remained good but fly tipping incidents reported to the council were on the increase and were at a three-year high. Members were advised that Highway and Transport Satisfaction Survey

results were released and were favourable for County Durham although the cleanliness of pavements in County Durham were lower than the national rates but higher than the rate for the North East.

The Community Action Team had just completed a project in Horden, and 366 issues of concern were identified and tackled that included the issue of 311 legal notices to enforce some activity. The next area of focus for the team would be Shildon. The find and fix team had undertaken works in 34 areas across the county.

The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager then referred to carbon emissions and adapting to climate change and advised members that the provisional estimates showed that the council were 59% lower than the 2008 baseline. There had been a 17% reduction in carbon emissions in comparison to last year's figure which was a significant reduction and was normally 6% a year and COVID-19 had a major contribution towards this reduction that was not sustainable.

Cabinet had considered a report this week on additional tree planting scheme that aimed to plant a tree for every child of school age that amounted to 69,000 trees through a woodland creation programme in partnership with a charity. Cabinet had also considered the leisure transformation programme that included adopting the BREEAM excellent standards for leisure centres that would contribute towards carbon emissions.

In terms of waste, one of the key indicators for household recycling showed the tonnage of both refuse and recycling had increased since the first lockdown. Recycling tonnage had increased but it hadn't increased as sharply as refuse tonnage so the recycling rate proportion that's recycled had gone down by two percentage points since last year. The increase in the volume of waste nationally had meant that waste disposal facilities were at capacity and have had to process some waste through non-energy waste channels such as landfill. This had resulted in the percentage of waste that was diverted from landfill was reduced by 2.7 percentage points since last year's figures. There had also been a steady increase in contamination levels of household recycling that resulted in that recycling not being able to be processed that had a financial effect on the council as they had to compensate contractors, this was monitored and action undertaken. There had been a six percent increase in the garden waste collection uptake and a three percent increase in bulky household waste collection.

The Chair noted that in terms of performance it was not significantly different to what they would normally expect. COVID had impacted on services, although it was disappointing to see the figures this could be recovered and performance improved.

Resolved: That the overall position and direction of travel in relation to quarter three performance, the impact of COVID-19 on performance and the actions being taken to address areas of underperformance including the significant economic and well-being challenges due to the pandemic be noted.

10 Refresh of the Work Programme

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director of Resources (Interim) that provided Members with an updated work programme for 2020/21 (for copy of report, see file of minutes).

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer was in attendance to present the report and indicated that the process of refreshing the committee's work programme started this time of year. The report highlighted that the refresh reflected the objectives and associated outcomes and actions identified within the Council Plan and was set in the context of the County Durham Vision 2035 and other key strategic documents and government legislation. In addition to using these documents to refresh the work programme they would also meet and discuss areas with colleagues in the service grouping and the climate change and environment partnership and members for their suggestions too.

The 2021 work programme had been delivered differently due to COVID-19, with a reduced number of meetings and prioritised items coming to virtual committee meetings and the remainder of the work programme items circulated electronically as briefing reports to members outside of the meeting.

The report outlined the committee's activity that had taken place this municipal year including cross-cutting areas where items across the remit of one or more committee's and where members of other overview and scrutiny committees were invited to attend this committee or vice versa. The number of items considered both virtually or as a briefing report had been identified by members of the committee to receive further updates, these items would go forward into the refreshed work programme.

The committee had previously identified an area for focused review back in February 2020 and this was Durham County Councils Refuse and Recycling Collection Policy, however this review was put on hold as a result of the pandemic.

Members were asked to decide if they wanted to identify this area as a topic for a future review activity or whether members wanted to suggest another topic for inclusion in the proposed work programme 2021/22.

Councillor Crute referred to the refuse and recycling collection policy review that was a priority as one of the main services of the council. He would support a review of this and previously indicated that members may wish to consider the impact of the street lighting and energy reduction programme, specifically on routes between settlements in rural areas and some location in urban areas, the programme itself brought huge dividends in terms of energy reductions and emission reductions but they might need to be assured as a council that this had not been done at the detriment of safety on streets during the hours of darkness. They needed to

consider if there had been any unintended consequences of the programme and if so look at ways of addressing them.

The Chair indicated that officers would take note of his proposal and consider for next year's work programme.

Councillor Avery commented that he had concerns about safety on the streets in particular housing estates.

The Chair indicated that it had been four years since this street lighting programme came in and was something that members needed to consider.

Resolved: That the work programme for 2020/21 be noted.

11 Any Other Business

The Chair indicated that this was the last committee meeting before the forthcoming local elections and wished to convey his thanks to all members and officers for their valuable contributions over the past four years that had been enlightening and interesting and most of all professional in nature and thanked members.

Himself and Councillor Milburn gave a big thank you to Overview and Scrutiny Officers for their unrelenting enthusiasm and hard work in making sure the committee ran smoothly and were provided with the most up to date and relevant papers.