

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham on **Friday 16 July 2021 at 9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor B Coult (Chair)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors J Elmer, E Adam, B Avery, J Charlton, L Fenwick, G Hutchinson, R Manchester, C Martin, I McLean, D Nicholls, R Potts, J Purvis, J Quinn, T Stubbs and S Townsend

Co-opted Members:

Mr T Bolton and Mrs P Holding

1 Apologies

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors P Atkinson, L Brown and B McAloon.

2 Substitute Members

No notification of Substitute Members had been received.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 March 2021 were agreed as a correct record and were signed by the Chair.

4 Declarations of Interest

There were not 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 Neighbourhoods and Climate Change - Overview

Members considered the report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change that provided members with an introductory overview of the Neighbourhoods and Climate Change service grouping (for copy of report, see file of minutes).

The Head of Environment Services was in attendance to present the report and deliver a presentation (for copy of presentation, see file of minutes).

The presentation focussed on the services within the Service Grouping that were within the remit of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee, that included Environmental Services, Technical Services and part of the Community Protection Service.

The Environment service covers a large number of services which are front facing and has statutory obligations to keep the streets clean and to respond within a reasonable timeframe. The Head of Environment explained that the grounds maintenance service has a £2.5million service level agreement (SLA) with schools and has similar contracts with social housing and Durham County Council open spaces. However, it was highlighted that the service had benefitted from the work of volunteers especially with Civic Pride projects and has provided opportunities for young people through the Hagrid project. In addition, Durham County Council employs 54 Neighbourhood Wardens some of which were sponsored by Town and Parish Councils, with one warden sponsored by Durham University.

Members were advised of the Bereavement Services that includes two crematoria which are managed by two joint committees, council graveyard and closed graveyards. The work of the Pest Control Service was also highlighted stating that the service undertakes both domestic and commercial work. It was also highlighted that this service area was responsible for allotments which is a large asset of the authority that is managed via devolved management or by direct let.

In relation to Waste Management the Head of Service focussed on how much has changed from being a wasteful society to becoming wiser in giving consideration to the environment and the impact of climate change. Durham County Council collects refuse and recycling from 250,000 households and in some areas garden waste too. Another area which was highlighted, subject to the ascent of the Environment Bill was food waste and that it is expected to be mandated by 2024 that local authorities collect food waste separately. This would require the service to be ready to meet that time frame, along with other local authorities. The Head of Service highlighted the work being done to encourage waste reduction and how the service was promoting and encouraging recycling, reusing and composting and avoiding contamination through engagement and education.

Members were advised about the waste contracts including the multi authority residual waste re-procurement contract which is a partnership contract with other local authorities that provides huge economies of scale. The facility would be a publicly owned energy from waste facility that would provide energy and heat offtake and the project will also benefit from carbon reduction and capture.

Members were advised that Technical services is divided into two areas – Strategic Highways is responsible for the assets, it covers planned maintenance of highways, footways and bridges; it also includes the Street Lighting Energy Reduction Project (SLERP); Drainage and Flood Risk Management and public rights of way. In a recent government survey regarding indicators to establish the efficiency of prioritising and targeting highways work Durham County Council came out top of all local highway authorities which enabled Durham County Council to secure further funding from government. The Highway Services are responsible for carrying out the actual maintenance of these assets including winter maintenance.

The presentation concluded with the challenges to the service being highlight and that these services covered areas that were front facing such as fly tipping which was an issue many members had in their divisions and it was important that Durham County Council combat this and other service challenges such as the increasing regulatory environment.

The Chair thanked the Officer for his very informative presentation and asked Members for their questions.

Councillor Stubbs referred to the garden waste collection service and the number of subscribers to the service and asked if this had increased during the COVID pandemic period or if the Council predicted a future increase.

The Head of Environment Services responded that they had seen an increase in the number of subscribers to the garden waste service despite the service being suspended for a short period during the pandemic at the start of the first lockdown, and that they now had over 65,000 subscribers to the service. The service had also come to the end of a three-year deal last year which could have resulted in a fall in subscriptions, but they had not seen any drop off from the renewal of the service and were at the highest level for the service since the introduction of the charges. He continued that government had indicated in the Environment Bill that there was a potential for requiring local authorities to collect garden waste for households for free or at a reasonable charge. Durham County Council would need to consider the Environment Bill and its implications, but the service was delighted at the take up of the garden waste collection services. This could result in extending the service and looking at current charges in the future.

Councillor Charlton referred to Highways Assets and was concerned to see a low number of grit bins.

The Head of Environment Services responded that providing additional grit bins was not an issue it was the servicing of them. In bad weather grit was used up very quickly and needed to be replenished very frequently and this was a limiting factor. There was a priority list for grit bins and when an application was received for a salt bin, an assessment was carried out of the conditions at that location. Currently there were a reasonable number of bins that could be replenished within the timescales.

Councillor Adam highlighted how the wide ranging and front facing services impacted on all individuals and asked in relation to the key challenges regarding staffing, and resources what the council could do to ensure they received fair funding from the government including from the shared prosperity fund, and any work required in terms of the levelling up agenda. He highlighted that these were key sources of funding to ensure that Durham County Council can meet the challenges identified.

The Head of Environment Services indicated that the challenges were across the council as a whole and not just for the Neighbourhoods and Climate Change Service Grouping. Colleagues in Regeneration, Economy and Growth Service Grouping and on a regional basis were doing their best to attract funding. The Head of Service advised that his role was to do the absolute best with the resources at hand and to achieve efficiencies where possible.

Mrs Holding congratulated the authority on the flower arrangements on the various roundabouts throughout the county adding that it was a pleasure to see the flowers on them and requested that more planting is undertaken. She then referred to dog fouling and indicated that while the dog mess was being picked up poo bags were not being placed in bins and were often left in situ or hung on trees and bushes and asked if the bags were biodegradable or if it was a lack of bins causing users to leave these bags lying around. She then referred to the waste from covid lateral flow testing kits and disposable masks and asked if they were recyclable and whether special bins could be used for this waste.

The Head of Environment Services thanked Mrs Holding for her feedback on the roundabouts and confirmed that he would feed this back to the team. He commented that they were trying to use more sustainable planting which resulted in less grass cutting, which was both better economically and for the look of the roundabouts. With regard to dog fouling this was a major irritation for members of the public. The service had produced informational posters and targeted areas where there were high numbers of complaints regarding dog fouling, Neighbourhood Wardens would also act on local intelligence where it was available. There were also campaigns and street signs that would indicate that the area was being patrolled and monitored and he confirmed that this was an ongoing issue and that the service was using various options to tackle this issue including education and working with schools to highlight this subject. In relation to the waste generated by COVID, there is a lot of waste resulting from COVID testing but it was designed as single use due to the biological material which could be hazardous. Where there

were centres with large volume of this type of waste, such as schools, arrangements are being considered for recycling. At the moment the government advice was to put these items in your waste bin, but the Head of Service indicated that he hoped that the agencies concerned were looking at what items could be recycled when safe to do so.

Councillor Manchester referred to food waste recycling and indicated that the committee were advised approximately three or four years ago that the council were preparing a business plan to implement a food waste programme. He asked if the Service would be able to use this work already undertaken or whether the service would have to start again and were the authority in a good position to meet or exceed any government expectations on time frames.

The Head of Environment Services indicated that the council had submitted a bid for food waste recycling for the Durham City area for a trial which was not successful. This however, had enabled the authority to do some thinking around this. The authority had received some government funding for waste research a couple of years ago and as part of this the service had investigated and analysed the potential for a food waste collection service. They were one step ahead of the game by having a comprehensive report that looks at the sort of vehicles required and caddies and in addition the council also has a team for this work, and he would keep the committee updated with the progress. The biggest challenge would be low emission vehicles to collect the food waste.

Councillor Quinn asked if there were any plans to improve cycle routes to encourage more cycling for example the A167 from Rushyford to Newton Aycliffe to improve travel safety.

The Head of Environment Services responded that the council has a Strategic Cycling and Walking Strategy and that was referenced in the Climate Emergency Response Plan to encourage the use of sustainable travel and supporting the Strategic Cycling and Walking Strategy. Supporting the strategy were a variety of bespoke plans to secure funds for new cycle and walkways as well as improving existing routes.

Councillor Adam added as the previous chair of the committee that consultation had taken place and plans were in place and that this route features in the strategic plan.

Councillor Nicholls referred to the winter maintenance and how some villages could be cut off if it was not for the winter maintenance programme. He asked if the same level of funding would be available for the team to maintain or improve the level of service. He also asked how the council were involving experts in the decisions made around the environment i.e., ecologists as Durham County Council needed to ensure everything was implemented in the best way possible and asked if resources such as Durham University and the Wildlife Trust were utilised.

The Head of Environment Services responded that Highways services do more gritting of priority networks in comparison to other local authorities, but that did not stop requests to expand the network. We have years where we have good winters and years where we have bad winters, and the approach was that a suitable budget was allocated which has enabled a build-up of resources as a result of the good winters and that the County had sufficient resilience and made it clear to the committee that he could not see any threats on delivery. In reference to environmental specialists the council does employ specialists and confirmed that the council feeds into the County Durham Partnership which is made up of public, private and third sector organisations and includes organisations such as the Wildlife Trust and the Environment Agency who all work together in delivering plans. He continued that, Durham County Council has worked closely with Durham University including having students work secondments with services, and that we were very fortunate that Durham University specialises in the areas that Durham County Council focus on and this is reciprocated as Durham County Council is an ambitious council.

Councillor Potts asked if they were plans to have a section where people could go to for advice in relation to the installation of solar panels and the erection of wind turbines.

The Head of Environment Services acknowledged that the members questions was very valid and advised that the service had the following plans going forward, firstly building on community intelligence to have a system similar to the single use plastics pledge providing the opportunity for individuals and companies to sign up to a similar pledge in relation to climate change and find out more information and ways they can help. Secondly, as a means of filling the gap without any funding establish a community organisation to change for example a gas boiler, which has a small grant fund providing a mix of grants and loans. On top of this the service has the Business Energy Efficiency Project (BEEP) which is very successful, they carry out a free survey and develop an action plan for businesses to help them through making small scale energy reductions.

Councillor Avery referred to the weight of bin wagons and commented that in his local area they were causing damage to the cobbled streets. He continued that this damage was being repaired with tarmac and that using tarmac was spoiling the look of these streets. He asked if the bins in these streets could be moved to the end of the street so as to prevent further damage to the cobbles.

The Head of Environment Services indicated that the vehicles weighed 26 tonnes and it was environmentally better to use the bigger vehicles as less journeys would be needed resulting in less carbon emissions, but there may be a potential to use a smaller electric bin lorry but would need to look at the merits of doing this.

Councillor Elmer referred to the contamination of recyclates and the disproportionate impact of the use of black bags in contamination and that it was difficult to persuade people to stop using them and required a national stance from government to ensure these products are not manufactured in the first place. He asked whether the council was putting pressure on government to legislate in relation to this issue.

The Head of Environment Services indicated that the upcoming Environment Bill announced proposals for greater national consistency in relation to recycling. However, it does require the support of the companies who make the materials to be in agreement also currently the rules regarding recycling can change from one local authority to another. There were two elements relating to black bags, a person who has excess recycling may think it is ok to put additional recycling into a black bag and place next to the recycling bin, the problem is that not only can black material not be recycled but the operatives cannot see what is in the bag. At the waste transfer stations those black bags are put to one side, there is no separate sorting of these bags. So, we either stop using black bin bags or we have an outlet that can utilise them in due course to extend as far as we can what we recycle in the county. An opportunity would be to have an outlet that could utilise the black plastic.

Resolved: That the report and presentation be noted.

7 Environment and Climate Change Partnership - Overview

Members considered the report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change that provided members with background information on the County Durham Environment and Climate Change Partnership (for copy of report, see file of minutes).

Prof Jon Gluyas, Durham University and Durham Energy Institute, Chair of the Climate Emergency workstream, Mr S Bhowmick, Environment and Design Manager and Mr S Priestly, Principal Ecologist 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 background and structure of the partnership, vision and partnership priorities, plans and challenges (for copy of presentation, see file of minutes).

The Environment and Design Manager advised members that following the County Durham Vision 2035 being agreed by the County Durham Partnership September 2019 and the restructure of the County Durham Partnership governance structure in September 2020, a new Environment & Climate Change Partnership (ECCP) was developed and introduced.

A workshop to consider a potential role, structure and priority areas for the new ECCP took place on 10 November 2020. Experts were drawn from across other

thematic partnerships as well as stakeholders from Durham County Council, Durham University, external agencies, the voluntary sector and business partners.

The new Environment and Climate Change Partnership governance structure was agreed at the workshop, with the partnership being led by the Environment and Climate Change Partnership Executive Board and supported by 3 workstreams:

- Climate Emergency
- Ecological Emergency
- Place, Health and Community

Following the establishment of the three workstreams the Environment and Climate Change Executive Board met for the first time on 24 March 2021.

Members were advised of the makeup of the Executive Board and of the new vision statement for the partnership - 'A better County Durham: sustainable communities, resilient to climate change, richer in nature.'

The Chair of the Climate Emergency Workstream, Professor Gluyas advised that he has worked with the low carbon team for a number of years and that this work stream had held their first meeting. The Chair of the Climate Emergency Workstream reminded members of the Council's declaration in 2019 of a Climate Emergency with two distinctive targets to reduce the Council's carbon footprint by 80% (relative to the baseline from 2008) by 2030 and that of the county completely decarbonise by 2050. However, the council's emissions equate to only 3% of the county's total emissions.

The remit of the workstream is broad in relation to the elimination of greenhouse gasses and link into national government and organisations. Durham University has developed the Durham Heat Hub. Half of the energy in the UK goes on heating and of that 77% comes from fossil fuels. The Durham Heat Hub is tackling this head on such as the repurposing of old coal mines and using the water from the disused mines to supplement heating. The Durham Miners Association at Red Hills had received a lottery grant to reduce their carbon footprint and would be an exemplar of how to move forward. The Chair of the Climate Emergency Workstream advised on the development of a customised Local Area Energy Plan to identify energy assets and challenges across the County and develop a programme of interventions. The workstream was also pulling together a countywide plan as to How to Tackle the Climate Emergency with the plan due for completion in February 2022. However, in the meantime the workstream has taken some old initiatives that perhaps needed more work such as the use of car parks and car ports to collect solar energy and potentially charge electric vehicles with, such initiatives allowing for greater engagement with the public. Another example of a project is the removal of greenhouse gasses produced in agriculture by the housing of animals which allows this to be undertaken. Work on this was being carried out by Durham University in

partnership with Houghall College this project was called Moothane. In relation to national work Durham University was working with the Church of England to reduce its carbon footprint with many Church of England Priests trained at Durham University therefore they will go out across the country taking the climate emergency message with them. There is a long way to go but this is the beginning.

The Principal Ecologist introduced the Ecological Emergency Workstream whose principal role was to co-ordinate strategic action to reverse the decline in biodiversity across the county. The Principal Ecologist explained how our wildlife has depleted over the centuries and the workstream would by following the Lawton Principles create bigger and better-connected habitats and ensure the strategies were in place to do this. Private, public and third sectors make up the representatives on the workstream, however going forward this may change to adapt to the needs of the workstream.

The main role of the Ecological Emergency Board will be to develop a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for County Durham which is likely to be a statutory requirement of the Environment Bill, due to receive Royal assent later this year. LNRS will help drive more coordinated, practical, focussed action and investment to help nature thrive, for its own sake and for the benefits a healthy environment brings to communities. The boundary for these statutory strategies is likely to be counties and the workstream was making progress towards the things likely to form part of these strategies, including habitat mapping, a statement of biodiversity priorities, key outcomes and associated actions to deliver them. Although the workstream representatives are currently fixed the workstream is aware they will need to adapt and change as they progress.

The Environmental and Design Manager introduced the Place, Health and Community workstream which has met twice and made considerable progress to date. The aim of the workstream was to make communities feel empowered to take environmentally based actions for themselves to achieve places where people want to live. The workstream intends to promote healthy lifestyles through community outreach including the links via the Area Action Partnerships and other engagement and partnership working.

The Environmental and Design Manager set out the workstream's intentions over the coming year and beyond and added that it had an opportunity to add value and be a critical friend to challenge existing agendas and use breadth of skills on the group to bring communities into the wider environmental agenda of Climate Change and Ecological Emergency but also the regional agenda.

The Chair thanked Officers for their comprehensive report and presentation. The officers responded to questions and comments from the Committee as follows:

Councillor Adam indicated that it was important to recognise the work that had been achieved since the council declared a climate emergency in 2019 and the creation

of the Climate Emergency Response Plan. The Partnership presentation identifies the joined up working and thinking and focusing on the outcomes and what can be delivered as a Council. This is a valuable partnership and the workstreams make it easier to manage and understand and was looking forward to hearing about its ongoing work. Councillor Adam then referred to the work programme and highlighted there was only reference made to one of the workstreams in the work programme (the ecological workstream) and suggested that the other work streams should be picked up in the committee's future work programme and that he would be raising this later. He indicated that the climate emergency workstream were having quarterly meetings but did not know how often the other workstreams were meeting. He then referred to the delivery of the reduction of CO₂ emissions, specifically transport, in terms of reduction of car use, delivery vehicles etc and asked whether there was work to be carried out in this field as it effects not only the carbon footprint but affects the air quality too which is a major health issue.

The Chair indicated that they would discuss the issues around the work programme at that agenda item.

The Principal Ecologist advised that the Ecological Emergency Board meets quarterly with sub-groups meeting in between board meetings to pick up on issues, also in both Cumbria and Northumberland they have both completed pilot Nature Recovery Strategies, so it is important to retain those links which have already been formed.

Prof Gluyas indicated that transport was a key part of their work, there was an active joint study between the Council and Durham University looking at what has happened during the pandemic with regard to energy consumption. It was clear from the unofficial results that there had not been much impact in terms of changes in energy required in buildings, but the real change was associated with people working from home and that there was a massive drop in carbon emissions from transport. Recently Durham University was awarded two national networks for the whole of the UK, one on the decarbonisation of heat and the use of hydrogen within transport that would address some of the issues with larger vehicles, possibly including some of the refuse vehicles. As the hub is in Durham then we would be the first to benefit from it.

Councillor McLean referred to an old colliery site in Horden that was not developed and through contacting officers in relation to establishing a countryside walkway, the site turned out to be a Specific Scientific Interest Site (SSIS) due to the natural habitat of invertebrates, however there was also mine water on the site too and there was a lot happening on the site with regard to ecology, the Councillor felt that the site had a lot to offer however, there seemed to be no engagement between services managing the various activities on the site, it needed to be pulled together. Discussions had been going on for three years and he commented that he was pleased to hear that something had now been set up to look at joint priorities.

Prof Gluyas indicated that he was not aware of that particular site but would ensure that it was on the agenda for the relevant workstream.

Councillor Potts indicated that he kept bees and commented on the importance of bringing people along and the difficulties faced by the public in finding who to contact about what should and should not be planted and suggested a website where people could get information and advice.

The Principal Ecologist responded that at the last meeting of the Ecological Emergency Board they discussed urban habitats and how they were classified as there was a danger of looking at it on too big a scale and you forget that you need to integrate biodiversity throughout the landscape and that included gardens, parks and urban areas and something like an oasis of a wildflower meadow in a community was a valuable resource and needed to be incorporated into the strategy. There had been discussion about a single point of contact and there was recognition that this needed to be done but this had not been achieved to date.

The Environmental and Design Manager reinforced the words of the Principal Ecologist and added that the Place workstream wanted to promote local food growth and provide links to cultivators and that discussions were taking place in relation to a food commitment statement. There was learning to be done and links had been made with other organisations and local authorities and this was a strong area to look at but unfortunately currently there was nothing joined up.

Councillor Potts added that lots of schools were trying to do this and perhaps this was a way forward.

Mrs Holding referred to homeworking and asked if because more people were staying at home was this having a detrimental impact on their individual carbon footprint.

Prof Gluyas responded that there was a reduction in transport with people working from home, and they will be publishing information from the study which may provide some information which may help to answer this question.

Mr Bolton referred to a previous question about where to get advice in relation to planting and advised of a couple of schemes local to him, 'edible incredible' that looks at growing vegetables on unused plots for intergenerational use and indicated that there are plots in Eldon and the Dene Valley areas. There were also groups in Darlington, Middlesbrough and Ashington so it may be worth having a look at the websites and suggested that this was something that members could sign post their local communities to.

The Environmental and Design Manager added that the Place, Health and Community workstream were getting local food growing at grass roots level embedded into the respective town and villages plans.

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

(ii) That the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee include a further update from the Environment and Climate Change Partnership in its work programme for 2022/23.

8 Quarter 4 2020/2021 - Performance Management Report

The Committee considered the report of the Interim Corporate Director of Resources 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 advised that this was a regular report to the committee and referred to the period from January to 31 March 2021, so it was not only a quarterly report it was also a yearend report in what has been a year that has been significantly impacted by COVID-19. The purpose of the report was for members to monitor performance of areas within the service that fall within the remit of this committee and to help members identify areas for further scrutiny. The report was presented against the three ambitions in the County Durham Vision 2035 – More and Better Jobs: Long and Independent Lives and Connected Communities.

The report picked up on Leisure Services that falls within the Regeneration and Economic Growth Service Grouping but falls within the remit of this committee. COVID 19 legislation led to closures in the leisure facilities so there will be a loss of income that members may want to scrutinise in further detail when they receive the quarterly finance report. The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager added that in relation to the council's outdoor areas which have remained open and have provided an opportunity for exercise outdoors and confirmed that Leisure centres reopened on 12 April. In relation to environmental cleanliness unfortunately the environmental surveys have not been carried out in the quarter being considered.

The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager advised that there had been significant rises in relation to fly tipping and this was due to the statutory closure of Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC). However, HWRC are now open although some were experiencing long queues, but Neighbourhood Wardens had carried out investigations and issued fixed penalty notices relating to fly tipping. The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager referred members to a chart within the report that showed how Durham County Council compared regionally and nationally using both the amount of fly tipping incidents per 1000 Hectares and per 1000 population, the result was similar for Durham County Council using both methods showing that we are below both the regional and national averages. Members were advised on the work of the Community Action Team in relation to their work at Shildon. In relation to waste there has been an increase in the amount of waste generated by households in terms of residual waste and recycling and this is also reflected nationally. This means that we generated more waste and recycling, but

the content of that recycling has gone down by three percentage points on last year and the amount of recycling from our HWRC has also reduced. Contamination of recycling is high at 34% which is greater than last year when it was 29% but it is reducing however there were financial impacts in that we were required to pay financial penalties to our contractors should contamination levels go too high. However, the amount of glass recycling had surpassed the three-year average with an increase of 22%. As a consequence of the increases in waste nationally the whole industry has been overwhelmed and as a result has had to divert more to landfill and therefore there has been an increase in the amount of waste diverted to landfill.

In terms of carbon emissions, in 19/20 we reduced carbon emissions by 51% (from the 2008 baseline) and are now working towards 70% reduction by 24/25. Although carbon emission figures for 20/21 will not be available until Q2 21/22. We are moving forward with a £8.3 million project to create a solar farm at our Morrison Busty depot in Annfield Plain. The solar farm will power the whole depot, including electric vehicle charge points for our fleet. The project is part of a wider refurbishment to improve energy efficiency including new cladding, windows, doors and LED lights.

The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager advised that Under the question: Is it easy to travel around the County and in relation to maintenance of our highways the percentage of A roads where maintenance is recommended this has increased to 3.0%, 12 months earlier it was 2.8% and the percentage of C roads where maintenance is recommended has increased to 4.3%, 12 months earlier it was 3.7%.

Councillor Adam referred to page 90 of the report in relation to contaminated waste and waste diverted to landfill and indicated that COVID had an impact in terms of the materials that were recycled and the problems with contamination but also the increase in the amount of recycling produced and the impact in terms of the sector finding it difficult to cope. In terms of people's habits and contaminated material it would be interesting for the council to identify how much contamination was actually from roadside bins and if this waste was transferred to landfill as landfill was costly and not the most effective solution.

The Head of Environment Services confirmed that roadside litter were sent to the energy from waste plant and were not included in the contamination figures. He explained that contamination was also an element of non-target materials such as clothes and hard plastic. He added that the service was planning to carry out more work in relation to education and refresh the campaigns to advise people of what goes into which bin.

Councillor Adam noted that the Council were recycling well, which was positive but in relation to the increase in the waste going to land fill could the reasons for this be identified.

The Head of Environment Services responded that the biggest impact was the closure of the household waste recycling centres and when they reopened other outlets were still closed and the market in terms of the consumption of those resources had dropped. This resulted in items that were normally recycled going to landfill. The market had since picked up but was not fully back to normal and remained fragile.

In response to a question from Councillor Nicholls relating to an update on the highway's figures, the Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager advised that the figures on road maintenance would be updated in Quarter 2 or Quarter 3.

Councillor Elmer then referred to page 93 of the papers and to reference 99, the indicator relating to the reduction of CO₂ emissions and suggested that more information was needed that drilled further down to give a suite of indicators identifying various sources of CO₂ as this would help to target improvements.

The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager informed members that this information was available on the Durham Insight website that gave a range of information in CO₂ sources including Industry, domestic and transport. Data starts at 1990 and goes through to the latest data in 2018 so this is information that can be provided to members.

Councillor Elmer suggested that in relation to Council operations this should include investment and procurement and asked if the council were considering their emissions in relation to these areas which needed to be factored in.

The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager responded that the performance indicator was a national indicator that looks at direct local authority actions and did not include third party impacts in relation to investments and procurement. He indicated that he would look to see if this information could be produced.

Resolved: That the overall position and direction of travel in relation to quarter four 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 because of the pandemic be noted.

9 Refresh of the Work Programme

The Committee considered the report of the Interim Corporate Director of Resources that provided members with an updated draft work programme for 2021/22 (for copy of report, see file of minutes).

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer was in attendance to present the report and highlighted that the work programme identified those agenda items prioritised by the

Chair and Vice Chair to come to formal committee and those items to be delivered via briefing reports throughout the lifecycle of this work programme. The Overview and Scrutiny Officer advised members that there was a need for the work programme to be flexible to accommodate items that may arise throughout the year.

Five meeting dates had been allocated for 2021/22 running from September to May and it was hoped that additional meetings may be an option as the work programme progresses.

A copy of the work programme had been circulated for consideration and members were invited to discuss and consider those areas contained in the programme and to identify any additional priorities for discussion and consideration.

Councillor Adam referred to the Partnership presentation delivered earlier in the meeting and highlighted that the work programme only made reference to the Ecological Emergency and not the other two workstream areas and it was important they were included in the committee's future work programme.

Councillor Elmer advised that the item referenced in the work programme was identified separately to the partnership work and at the time the Chair and Vice Chair were unaware of the partnership work in this area. However, they would consider adding to the work programme and including where appropriate in the programme update reports relating to the other remaining partnership workstreams.

The Chair indicated that consideration would be given as to how they could build the items mentioned into the work programme.

Councillor Adam then referred to the Street Lighting Energy Reduction Project that was included in the work programme as a briefing report and suggested that this item should come to committee. He commented that this particular project was initiated in 2013 with a refresh update in 2015 and a further update report was due to comeback to committee in 2020, but this had not happened. However, at the last meeting of the committee in March 2021, as part of the work programme debate Members had indicated this was an important area for the council to look at as there had been a number of issues with regard to the removal of some street lighting and therefore should be an item debated at formal committee.

Councillor Adam then referred to the allotments policy and how they had heard from the environment climate change partnership who were keen to encourage food growth. He identified that the council has an allotments policy and the committee had previously established a working group to look at this policy in 2018, with this review continuing for two years, encompassing a great amount of work which culminated in him, as Chair of the committee, presenting the report to Cabinet in 2020. The committee's recommendations included some key issues to ensure that allotments were seen as a key part of provision. He asked if this could also be included into the work programme, initially as a briefing report to bring members up

to date in this work programme with a further report coming to committee in the 2022/2023.

The Chair indicated that all the points raised by members would be considered to see how they could be incorporated into the work programme. Councillor Townsend asked if they could also consider including the Stockton and Darlington Bicentenary celebrations into the work programme.

The Chair confirmed that it would be considered.

Mr Bolton supported Councillor Adam on the request for the allotments to be included in the work programme. He then raised two issues for consideration in the work programme the first Seaham Garden Village proposal.

Councillor Elmer commented that at the next meeting they were going to be looking at the Carbon Emergency Response plan and it was important when they look at that plan, they also celebrate successes but also identify the gaps and asked members to think about where the county was not doing so well.

Mr Bolton responded that the committee in the past had received reports on geothermal projects, but these projects had not progressed. His second item was in relation to Brightwater project which was a heritage lottery funded project which was working around river skerne and its attributes. The aim of the project was to bring back land to wetlands and suggested that members could consider visiting the project to see the work. The project is funded by Heritage Lottery funding and commenced in 2018, the project is led by Durham Wildlife and Durham County Council and suggested that members may want to visit the project.

Councillor Elmer advised that he had knowledge of the areas involved as he had worked in those areas.

Councillor Nicholls referred to wild meadows and flowers and what they could learn from other authorities which had successfully transformed areas into wild meadow. Councillor Nicholls then spoke of the need to involve people in communities through civic pride with litter picking schemes and better engage with parish councils and ensure that funding was available and asked if this could be included in the work programme.

Councillor Elmer referred to the ecological emergency that cut across all council services asking how we can make improvements. He then indicated that wildflower meadows were a part of that because of their diversity and that it was important to take people with us on the journey through consultation and interpretation on site location. Sites must be in the right places to create a network of ecological sites and to single out the responsibilities of planning for making decisions reflecting on how land is maintained and managed.

The Overview and Scrutiny officer advised that Civic Pride was included in the work programme under environmental schemes/projects.

The Chair indicated that they had a section on waste management so would look to see if this could be incorporated into that report.

Councillor Nicholls thanked the Chair and added that schemes/ projects such as Civic Pride were appreciated by communities and that the work undertaken in relation to Climate Change was positive.

Councillor Adam referred to the work programme and that there was no mention of site visits. The Overview and Scrutiny Officer advised that currently we were unable to include site visits due to COVID restrictions and when the restrictions were lifted this would be included in consultation with the Chair/Vice-Chair and committee.

The Chair indicated that they would take all the points raised away and look to see if these could be incorporated into the work programme moving forward.

Resolved: (i) That the comments of the committee on the proposed work programme for 2021/22 be noted.

(ii) That the work programme for 2020/21 and the flexibility it offers to respond to emerging issues be agreed.