

17 April 2015

**Refresh of the Work Programme
for the Environment &
Sustainable Communities
Overview and Scrutiny
Committee**

Report of Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of the report is to provide members with information contained within the Council Plan 2015 – 2018, relevant to the work of Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This allows the opportunity for members to refresh the Committee Work Programme to reflect the three objectives and subsequent outcomes identified within the Council Plan for the Altogether Greener priority theme.

Background

2. The current Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Work Programmes focus on the priority areas identified within the context of the Council Plan, Cabinet's forward plan of key decisions, Sustainable Community Strategy, Partnership plans and strategies, performance and budgetary control data and changes in Government legislation.
3. In relation to the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Members will recall that the Work Programme was refreshed at the Committee meeting held on the 3 July 2014, ensuring that areas of focus were in line with current and forthcoming priorities within the Committee's remit. Further areas of focus for the Committee have been added throughout 2014 to reflect changing Government policy and at the request of Members.

Council Plan 2015 – 2018

4. The Council Plan is the overarching high level plan for the County Council, which covers a four year period and is updated on an annual basis. The plan sets out how the Council will consider the corporate priorities for improvement and the key actions the Authority will take in delivering the long term goals in the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Council's own improvement agenda. Attached at Appendix 2

is the Altogether Greener section of the Council Plan for members' consideration.

5. Within the Council's Altogether Greener priority theme, the focus is ensuring an attractive and 'liveable' local environment and contributing to tackling global environmental challenges.
6. To help address these issues the Council has rationalised the structure of our objectives and outcomes framework to concentrate on three objectives. The "Reduce waste" objective has been removed from the Plan. Whilst this remains an important area to monitor, as all work in this area such as the introduction of the new waste management contracts has now been implemented. The objective around Durham's built environment has also been removed from the Plan as it was felt that there are no significant Council actions for the future in this area. However, this objective has been retained by the Environment Partnership as it is a big area for change for several partner organisations. The rationalised set of objectives and outcomes are set out below:

Deliver a cleaner, more attractive and sustainable environment

G1 – Reduce environmental crime

G2 – A sustainable approach to waste management

Maximise the value and benefits of Durham's natural environment

G3 – Enhance mitigation and adaptation to climate change.

G4 – Natural assets are valued and conserved.

Reduce carbon emissions and adapt to the impact of climate change

G5 – Communities are more aware and resilient to the impact of extreme weather events

G6 - The Council, homes and businesses are more energy efficient

G7 - Improved infrastructure to support sustainable transport

7. Over the next four years, the Council will strive to ensure an attractive and 'liveable' local environment and will contribute to tackling global challenges, by focusing on the actions required to achieve the above objectives.
8. The Council Plan also identifies a series of actions detailing the work which needs to be undertaken by the authority in order to deliver the areas identified above.

Current Work Programme

9. During 2014/15, the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee has undertaken budgetary and performance monitoring, in depth Scrutiny Reviews, systematic 6 monthly reviews of progress against recommendations and overview presentations in relation to the following areas:

In Depth Scrutiny Reviews

- Management of the Woodland Estate Owned by Durham County Council – Maximise the benefits of Durham’s natural environment G4 – Natural assets are valued and conserved.

Systematic Review

- Flooding - Reduce carbon emissions and adapt to the impact of climate change G5 – Communities are more aware and resilient to the impact of extreme weather events
- Reducing the Council’s Carbon Emissions – Reduce carbon emissions and adapt to the impact of climate change – G6 The Council, homes and businesses are more energy efficient.
- Development of Renewable Technologies - Reduce carbon emissions and adapt to the impact of climate change – G6 The Council, homes and businesses are more energy efficient.

Overview Activity

- Heart of Teesdale Landscape Partnership – Maximise the value and benefits of Durham’s natural environment G4 – Natural assets are valued and conserved.
- Clean and Green Teams – Deliver cleaner, more attractive and sustainable environment G1 –Reduce environmental crime.
- Air Quality Action Plan and consultation strategy – Deliver cleaner, more attractive and sustainable environment G1 - Reduce environmental crime.
- Landscape Scale Projects – Maximise the value and benefits of Durham’s natural environment G4 – Natural assets are valued and conserved.
- Waste Programme Update – Deliver cleaner, more attractive and sustainable environment G1 –Reduce environmental crime; G2 – A sustainable approach to waste management.
- Community Action Team use of targeted interventions – Deliver a cleaner, more attractive and sustainable environment G1 - Reduce environmental crime.
- Winter Maintenance Plan Update – Reduce carbon emissions and adapt to the impact of climate change G5 – Communities are more aware and resilient to the impact of extreme weather events.
- European Structural and Investment Funds – Low Carbon Economy Update – Reduce carbon emissions and adapt to the impact of climate change G6 – The Council, homes and businesses are more energy efficient.
- Limestone Landscape Programme Update – Maximise the value and benefits of Durham’s natural environment G4 – Natural assets are valued and conserved.
- Underground Coal Gasification – Maximise the value and benefits of Durham’s natural environment G3 – Enhance mitigation and adaptation to climate change.
- Environment Improvement Campaigns – Deliver cleaner, more attractive and sustainable environment G1 – reduce environmental crime; G2 – A sustainable approach to waste management.

- Flood Risk Management Authorities for County Durham Updates – Maximise the value and benefits of Durham’s natural environment G3 –Enhance mitigation and adaption to climate change. Reduce carbon emissions and adapt to the impact of climate change G5 - Communities are more aware and resilient to the impact of extreme weather events.
- Local Nature Partnerships – Maximise the value and benefits of Durham’s natural environment G4- Natural assets are valued and conserved.
- Delivery of Clean Bus Technology – Reduce carbon emissions and adapt to the impact of climate change G7 – Improved infrastructure and support to transport.
- Climate Change Strategy and Delivery Plan – Reduce carbon emissions and adapt to climate change G6 - The Council, homes and businesses are more energy efficient.
- Warm Up North - Reduce carbon emissions and adapt to the impact of climate change G6 – The Council, homes and businesses are more energy efficient.
- Tyne and Wear Aquifer Protection Scheme – Maximise the value and benefits of Durham’s natural environment G4 - Natural assets are valued and conserved.

Budgetary and performance monitoring

- Quarterly budgetary and performance monitoring for Neighbourhood Services Service Grouping.

Areas for consideration in the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme

10. Having considered the Altogether Greener section of the Council Plan for 2015 – 2018 it is suggested that the following action areas could be considered in the update of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme.

Deliver a cleaner, more attractive and sustainable environment

- Waste transfer station capital improvement programme/strategy – An overview of the programme and strategy.
- Fly-tipping – Overview of the work of the Task Force.
- Countywide campaigns to tackle environmental crime – Update.
- Garden waste – Update on the collection scheme.
- Revision of refuse collection routes – Overview.
- Environmental initiatives - Overview of schemes undertaken with communities, colleges and schools and volunteering opportunities.

Maximise the value and benefits of Durham’s natural environment

- Allotments – Overview of work undertaken to maximise the use of allotments within the County.
- Contaminated Land Strategy – Update on strategy and detail of how it is delivered across the county.

Reduce carbon emissions and adapt to the impact of climate change

- Fuel poverty – Overview of fuel poverty within the County.
- Geothermal energy – Overview of technologies available.
- Strategic cycle route network and walkways – Overview of work undertaken in relation to cycle routes and walkways within the County.

Council Plan

Cross Cutting Themes

11. Below are areas which have a cross cutting issues from other 'Altogether' themes that link into Altogether Greener

Altogether	Objective	Outcome	Link to Altogether Greener
Wealthier	Thriving Durham City	Improved infrastructure to support economic growth. W3	G7 - Improved infrastructure to support sustainable transport.
Safer	Reduce Anti-social Behaviour	Reduce incidence of anti-social behaviour and low level crime. S2	G1 – Reduce environmental crime
	Protect vulnerable people from harm	Community and organisational resilience for emergency preparedness, response and recovery. S5	G5 – Communities are more aware and resilient to the impact of extreme weather events.
Healthier	Improve the mental and physical wellbeing of the population	Increased physical activity and participation in sports and leisure. H15	G4- Natural assets are valued and conserved.
Better for Children and Young People	Children and young people make healthy choices and have the best start in life	A range of positive activities are available for children and young people. C7	G4 - Natural assets are valued and conserved.
Altogether Better Council	Working with our communities	Communities and stakeholders are engaged and communicated with	Cuts across all Greener objectives and outcomes.

		ABC4	
		Effective Partnership Working ABC5	G5 - Communities are more aware and resilient to the impact of extreme weather events.

Next Steps

12. The Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider the appropriate section from the Council Plan, Appendix 2 (copy attached) to inform the Committee work programme for 2015 - 2016, reflecting on the current work programme detailed in paragraphs 9 and 10 above.
13. Members will receive a further report at the next Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee confirming/agreeing the Committee's work programme for 2015-2016 based on today's discussion and agreement.

Recommendations

14. That the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny note the information contained in Altogether Greener priority theme of the Council Plan 2015-2018. Appendix 2 (copy attached)
15. That the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee refresh the work programme for 2015-2016 by discussing and considering those actions identified under the 'Altogether Greener' priority theme of the Council Plan 2015-2018 Appendix 2 and reflected in paragraphs 9 and 10 of the report.
16. That the Environment and Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on the 8 July 2015, receive a further report detailing the Committee's work programme for 2015-2016.

Background papers:

Council Plan 2015-18 – Cabinet report – 18 March 2015

Contact: Tom Gorman Tel: 03000 268027 email: tom.gorman@durham.gov.uk

Author: Diane Close Tel: 03000 268141 email: diane.close@durham.gov.uk

Appendix 1: Implications (The following implications are taken directly from the report to Cabinet on 18 March 2015, re the Council Plan and Service Plans 2015-2018.)

Finance - The Council Plan sets out the corporate priorities of the Council for the next 3 years. The Medium Term Financial Plan aligns revenue and capital investment to priorities within the Council Plan

Staffing - The Council's strategies are being aligned to achievement of the corporate priorities contained within the Council Plan.

Risk - Consideration of risk is a key element in the corporate and service planning framework with both the Council Plan and Service Plans containing sections on risk.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty - Individual equality impact assessments have been prepared for each savings proposal within the Council Plan. The cumulative impact of all savings proposals in total has also been presented to Council and will be updated as savings proposals are further developed. In addition a full impact assessment has previously been undertaken for the Council Plan. The actions in the Council Plan include specific issues relating to equality and aim to improve the quality of life for those with protected characteristics. The Plan has been influenced by consultation and monitoring to include equality issues. There is no evidence of negative impact for particular groups.

Accommodation - The Council's Corporate Asset Management Plan is aligned to the corporate priorities contained within the Council Plan.

Crime and Disorder - The Altogether Safer section of the Council Plan sets out the Council's contributions to tackling crime and disorder.

Human Rights – None

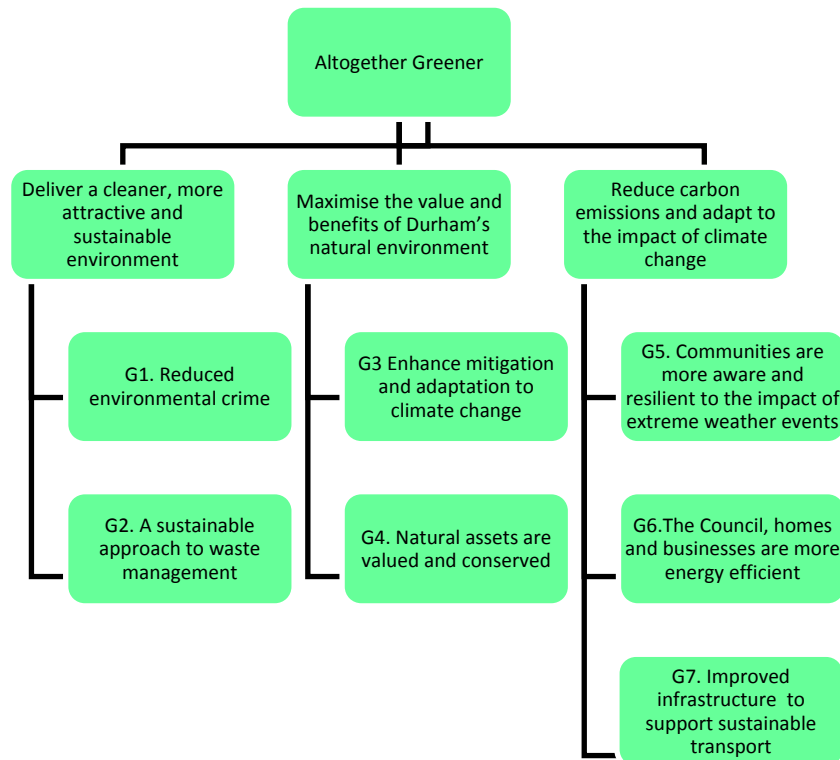
Consultation - Council and partnership priorities have been developed following an analysis of available consultation data including an extensive consultation programme carried out as part of the development of the interim Sustainable Community Strategy and this has been reaffirmed by subsequent consultation on the budget. Results have been taken into account in developing our resourcing decisions.

Procurement – None

Disability Issues – None

Legal Implications – None

Altogether Greener



Our Vision

The key aims of the Altogether Greener priority theme are to make environmental improvements and drive sustainable development across the authority area. Key areas of focus include tackling the negative impacts of climate change; encouraging sustainability and energy efficiency; and improving the quality of our local environment.

The Altogether Greener agenda has had to be reconsidered and balanced in line with our diminishing resources and the priorities of our local communities. The need to work collaboratively with partners, residents and businesses to build collective ownership and action has never been greater.

To help achieve our vision Altogether Greener has the following high level objectives:

1. Deliver a cleaner, more attractive and sustainable environment

Research shows a person's local environment has a profound impact on their quality of life and wellbeing, with neglected environments creating a sense of unease which can create and/or intensify problems of anti-social behaviour. Our local communities recognise this link and consistently rank the quality of their local environment as important.

Over the next three years, we will be **reviewing our operational procedures in relation to street Cleansing and Grounds Maintenance**, to ensure that streets and open spaces are consistently well-maintained and free of litter, dog fouling, graffiti and dumped rubbish. We will **reduce environmental crime** by continuing to target those who deliberately blight our environment using multi-agency countywide programmes of improved intelligence, greater education and awareness, and tougher enforcement measures.

Delivery of the **Waste Programme** remains a key area of focus. The Waste Programme underpins our Municipal Waste Management Strategy, which places an emphasis on sustainable waste management, prioritising waste reduction, re-use and recycling. It will deliver significant cost and environmental savings through operational changes, reduced contract costs, elimination of landfill tax payments, increased recycling and energy generation.

Future improvement projects include: maximising the potential of our Waste Transfer Stations following significant capital investment; reviewing our approach to business waste in Durham City to improve cleanliness, harmonising collection arrangements for clinical waste, and implementing both the Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) provision plan and the garden waste collection scheme.

However, success will not be achieved by us alone. To be truly successful we need to build a strong sense of community and increase the number of people engaged in the improvement of their own communities, for example, participation in 'in-bloom' initiatives. We will continue to build on environmental initiatives within schools and colleges, promote our environmental awareness programmes and encourage local volunteering.

2. Maximise the value and benefits of Durham's natural environment

Our natural environment is incredibly important. It provides employment, education, areas to enjoy, relax and reflect, as well as the resources and raw materials essential for life. In addition, research has consistently shown that engagement with 'green' environments by, for example, visiting the countryside, enjoying green spaces in towns and cities, watching wildlife or volunteering can provide significant physical, mental and social benefits. Therefore, as a society we need to value the natural environment and ensure it is protected for future generations.

We will continue to work with our partners and communities to deliver projects that will conserve and enhance the unique biodiversity, geo-diversity, landscape, rich heritage and cultural assets of County Durham. Through **landscape scale projects** delivered by various partnerships, we also work to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of specific landscape areas such as the North Pennines AONB and Durham Heritage Coast. We are also aware that resilient and healthy ecosystems across our rural and urban landscapes play a crucial role in absorbing and storing carbon, and thus helping to protect us from climate change.

Where budgets allow, and in line with community requirements, we will carry out improvements to enhance our urban parks and open spaces, for example, the commencement of an improvement programme for **Wharton Park** in Durham

City. We will also be working with our communities to **maximise the use of allotments** and encourage sustainable food production.

We will continue to support delivery of the **Contaminated Land Strategy**, which outlines how we will identify historic sources of contamination and work with land owners to prevent, remedy or mitigate any harm or pollution that may have resulted, as well as **Air Quality Action Plans**, which set out how we will reduce air pollution levels and improve standards of air quality.

3. Reduce carbon emissions and adapt to the impact of climate change.

The reality of climate change is now generally accepted and although it may bring some localised benefits, such as fewer winter deaths in temperate climates and increased food production in certain areas, the overall effects are likely to be overwhelmingly negative. In recent years, we have experienced more extreme weather events and we expect more major flooding incidents as well as hotter summers in the future.

As a reflection of the seriousness of climate change, European targets have been set that oblige us to achieve a 40% reduction in carbon emissions by 2030. Our **Carbon Management Strategy** not only sets out how we will achieve this target but also how we will lessen the impact of the unavoidable consequences of climate change. Improvement projects underway include increasing the energy efficiency of our buildings, reducing the carbon footprint of our operations, retrofitting 41,000 street lights as part of the 6 year **Street Lighting Energy Reduction Programme** and incorporating Sustainable Urban Drainage Schemes (SUDS) to reduce surface water flooding and improve water quality at a local level. We are working through the North East partnership scheme **Warm Up North** to help households with energy saving improvements, for example central heating, double glazing and wall or loft insulation. The scheme can help private homeowners, rented property owners and those on low incomes meet upfront costs of making their properties more energy efficient.

We will continue to invest in a programme of improvements that will encourage and enable people to commute to work, education and services by sustainable modes of transport. One of such initiatives will be to develop and improve the **strategic cycle route network** across County Durham to provide improved links and access to main towns and rural locations. Not only would this enhance the environment, it would also contribute to the quality of people's lives, fitness, health and well-being.

Summary

Going Well:

- Our Street Lighting Energy Reduction Programme is 50% complete; more than 20,000 street lights retrofitted to date reducing energy costs by £450,000
- Over 1,100 households received installations to improve energy efficiency through 'Warm Up North' Scheme
- 1,700 people volunteered as part of the 2014 Big Spring Clean campaign. During the 3,000 volunteer hours, 1,200 bags of litter were collected and, trees and debris were removed from the River Wear in Durham City.
- Work is progressing with the development of a new cycle/walk multi user route between Shildon and Newton Aycliffe (Note: moved from 'Going Well' in Wealthier section)

Look Out For:

- A shared-use walking and cycling path in Aycliffe industrial estate (between Heighington station and Hitachi);
- Resurfacing of the national cycle network route 14 (Durham City Riverbanks);
- Construction of the next phase of the Great North Cycle Way between Chester le Street and Durham and a new shared use route between West Rainton and Carrville, which will become Cycling Super Routes.
- 2015 Heritage Open Days which will allow free access to nearly 70 venues across the county for 4 consecutive days in early September 2015
- Volunteering opportunities to help improve the local environment and make neighbourhoods a cleaner and greener place to live;
- Opportunities to make a valuable contribution to improving our countryside as a Volunteer Countryside Ranger
- 2015/16 Community Action Team Programme identifying the 10 locations across the county which are most in need of targeted interventions to tackle local housing and environmental issues
- 2015 Big Spring Clean (28th February to 18th April)

<p>Cause for Concern:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase in severe weather events; including prolonged winter snow, heavy rain storms, high winds	<p>Did you know?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 97.1% of municipal waste is now diverted from landfill• More than 2,200 tonnes of furniture and household items were saved from disposal and provided for families on low incomes as part of the DCC's Reuse Scheme. The County Durham Refuse forum received a prestigious best Partnership Award in 2014 from the Local Authority Recycling Advisory Committee• DCC were awarded 15 green flags for our parks, open spaces, countryside sites and cemeteries• Durham City and Sedgefield were both being awarded a gold gilt award for their entries in Britain in Bloom 2014.
---	---

