

## **DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL**

At a Meeting of **Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in **Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham** on **Thursday 13 April 2017** at **9.30 am**

### **Present:**

**Councillor B Graham (Chairman)**

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

Councillors E Adam, J Armstrong, J Clare, J Clark, J Gray, G Holland, B Kellett, A Liversidge, P May, O Milburn, S Morrison and L Taylor

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

Mr T Bolton and Mr D Kinch

### **1 Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Bell, D Hall, I Jewell and P Stradling.

### **2 Substitute Members**

No notification of Substitute Members had been received.

### **3 Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held 6 March 2017 were agreed as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

### **4 Declarations of Interest**

There were no Declarations of Interest.

### **5 Any items from Co-opted Members or interested parties**

There were no items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties.

## **6 School Carbon Reduction Programme and other Outdoor and Sustainability Education School Initiatives**

The Chairman introduced the Educational Development Advisor, Rich Hurst, who was in attendance to give an update as regards the School Carbon Reduction Programme and other outdoor education school initiatives (for copy see file of minutes).

The Educational Development Advisor - Sustainability noted that he would give Members a “whistle-stop tour”, noting that in terms of governance, the School Carbon Reduction Programme (SCRCP) was steered through the Carbon Management Programme (Revenue Board). He added that the Climart project and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) Challenge were coordinated through the Climate Change Group, a sub-group of the Environment Partnership. It was explained that OASES (Outdoor and Sustainability Education Specialists) led initiatives were monitored by the NEEN (North East Environment Network) Board of Trustees.

In terms of the background to the SCRCP, Members were reminded that the Durham County Council (DCC) Carbon Management Plan had been developed in 2008 and schools had been identified as a key group to engage. It was added that in 2010, DCC took part in a national Low Carbon Schools programme with the Carbon Trust and The Schools Forum agreed to fund a pilot, working with 60 schools initially. The Educational Development Advisor – Sustainability explained that this work had been delivered in schools by OASES, a charity partner of DCC.

Members learned that the challenge was for DCC and therefore in turn schools to reduce carbon emissions and that schools were becoming a larger proportion of the Council’s estate as the number of Council buildings was rationalised. It was added that the Authority has invested significantly in its buildings and street lighting through programmes such as SPA (Solar Photovoltaic Arrays) and BEER (Building Energy Efficiency Retrofits) and on energy efficiency and renewable, however not at schools specifically unless as part of repairs or a new build. Councillors learned that emissions from schools had increased from 53% in 2008/09 to 61% in 2015/16, as a percentage of the total emissions from all Council buildings.

The Educational Development Advisor - Sustainability noted that in developing the programme, a pilot scheme trialled and adapted resources available via the Carbon Trust and from this the programme was incorporated into a DCC Energy service level agreement (SLA) which schools buy into, to ensure the programme was viable long term. It was explained that in 2016/17, 92% of schools had bought into the SLA and, while there was a risk from the increase in academy schools and mergers, it was important that the programme met the needs of schools for the future.

It was added that the support available to secondary schools and academies allowed 11 hours of flexible support which included: a review of progress with the Head Teacher/Business Manager and evaluation of the data; re-assessing of the action plan, agreeing upon key priorities; and sessions with pupils and key staff groups to support and initiate further behaviour change activities, “active citizenship”.

Members learned that in terms of primary schools, 8 hours of flexible support included: a review of progress with the Head Teacher/Business Manager; re-assessing of the action plan and identifying new key priorities; meeting with pupils and key staff groups to support and initiate further behaviour change activities; and a minimum of two visits per year.

The Educational Development Advisor – Sustainability highlighted the software that gave the analysis of the data, on a plus one day basis, with schools logging in to access their data, enabling them to drill down and look at specific issues. It was highlighted that from 2013 gas use was able to be tracked quickly and with better accuracy, with an ability to also use the information with pupils in terms of the curriculum for mathematics lessons. The Committee learned that occupancy times were recorded in terms of boiler use.

Councillors noted that the Government had changed regulations in respect of water billing and that currently the Council was in the process of procuring a company to undertake the billing element of water contracts. It was added that looking to see if a better deal could be made was part of the Energy SLA and that this may lead to cheaper prices due to increased competition, with this likely to take effect sometime in summer.

It was noted that the spend in terms of school energy costs had risen from £2,578,640 in 2004/05 to £6,484,460 in 2014/15 and therefore it was clear that action needed to be taken. It was explained that he estimated spend for 2016/17 was £5,423,640, reversing the trend. Members were referred to a graph showing the emissions in terms of kgCO<sub>2</sub> over time and it was highlighted for secondary schools these were levelling off this year.

It was explained in terms of capital investment, there had been work with Honeywell in terms of whole building retrofits, with piloting of the concepts to ensure they were appropriate for schools. It was added that the Energy Performance Contracts (EPCs) worked by guaranteeing savings so that clients know they can afford repayments. It was noted that 15 shortlisted schools were to undergo a free desktop analysis, with further information to come forward around Easter. Members noted a whole package of energy saving measures which would be paid for through the energy efficiency savings, again guaranteed by Honeywell.

Another capital scheme explained to the Committee involved working with Salix Finance to develop a countywide LED lighting project that would be 0% on up to 8 year payback. Members noted a case study at Coundon in this regard, repaying over 5 years and providing a higher quality LED lighting solution.

The Educational Development Advisor - Sustainability noted REBUS (Renovation for Energy efficient BUildingS) an EU funded project, led by one of the several partners, the City of Malmo, with the DCC lead being the Principal Officer: Funding And Projects, Ian Bloomfield from the Low Carbon Economy Team.

Members noted that the School Carbon Reduction Programme was the category winner in the Climate change section for “the outstanding contribution to the reduction of school energy consumption and the advancement of education”. Councillors were reminded of the participation of schools, and other Council buildings, in Earth Hour 2017 helping children to understand the global combined effect that can be achieved.

In terms of other projects, the Educational Development Advisor - Sustainability noted the Climart project involving 6 secondary schools, developed in conjunction with the Council's Civil Contingencies Unit. It was explained that pupils would look at climate change and climate resilience and adaptation and work with professional artists to develop artwork that appears when it rains, to then highlight and raise awareness of those issues.

Members were informed of another project, developed through the Climate Change Group, working with Thorn Lighting at Spennymoor. The challenge was to develop a product or concept that helped reduce energy use in the home or a school, with the STEM Club from Wolsingham School having pitched two proposals: a remote light monitoring system; and a kettle with simple LEDs to indicate the fill level.

Councillors noted a year-long teacher training initiative linking art with other curriculum opportunities to nature and the four seasons for primary and special education schools. It was noted that "Harmony" had been developed by the Prince's School of Traditional Arts in London and that sixteen schools were involved. Members noted an exhibition of the work in schools would be on display in the Durham Room at County Hall the week beginning 10 July 2017.

Members noted that school projects led by OASES included "Doorstep Orchard", a People's Postcode Lottery funded project running between June 2016 and April 2017, involving 5 schools to learn about the creation of the Doorstep Orchard and Fordham Road, Newton Hall. It was added that 4 family events would help promote the use and care of the site. Another OASES led project mentioned was "Growing Together", a Children in Need funded activity, over the period September 2015 to September 2017. It was noted it aimed to improve the relationships, activity levels and diets of disadvantaged families. Members noted 4 schools had established growing areas and family Gardening Clubs, with family growing events running through the school holidays.

The Educational Development Advisor – Sustainability added that other OASES led projects included Illuminating Waste, Active Learning and activities at Hamsterley Forest.

It was noted that Illuminating Waste had been funded by the Derwent Valley Area Action Partnership (AAP), running between June 2016 and March 2017. It was explained it aimed to raise community awareness of local environmental issues, with 7 schools and 4 youth groups having produced a show window displays that were illuminated as part of the "Christmas at Consett" event. It was added that local businesses had sponsored the event, donated clean waste and housed the window displays.

Members noted that Active Learning was a consultancy service, accessible using the Primary PE and Sports Premium funding or Pupil Premium. It was explained that it was available as pupil sessions or accredited teacher training and had been proven to enhance pupil engagement with learning, particularly amongst those pupils who struggled to engage in the classroom.

The Educational Development Advisor – Sustainability concluded by noting that OASES held the Forestry Commission Learning Licence for Hamsterley Forest and supported around 40 school visits each year, enabling pupils to engage in outdoor learning, with activities such as: Gruffalo Discovery for Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS); Flora and Fauna Identification at Key Stage 1 (KS1); Homes and Habitats at KS2; and Orienteering at KS3.

The Chairman thanked the Educational Development Advisor - Sustainability and asked Members for their questions and comments.

Mr D Kinch asked if graphs could be produced larger or transmitted electronically for clarity.

Councillor G Holland noted this would likely be his last Committee meeting and utterances as a County Councillor and added for the record that he felt the work of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee was outstanding, first class and therefore should be congratulated. Councillor G Holland noted that the topic of energy was a politically driven one, with energy independence for the country being very important. He highlighted the cost of around £5 million in terms of maintaining school buildings in energy terms and reminded Members that many new buildings were now energy self-sufficient. Members learned that the efficiency of solar panels was increasing from around 3% to around 23% and that by incorporating such technologies, schools should not cost these large amounts to maintain in the future. Councillor G Holland added that while he did not think that such measures widespread would stop global warming, he felt that looking to countries such as Sweden that had around 50% of their energy from renewable, that this was something that the Government, and the County Council should be looking towards, securing our energy independence for the future.

The Educational Development Advisor - Sustainability noted that 12 schools had solar arrays fitted, externally funded, however issues in terms of being able to connect to the grid, the roofs on the buildings and limited capital had been factors. Initiatives to reduce demand were also being pursued by schools through better technology such as LED lighting.

Councillor G Holland added that he felt that capital investment in such technologies and schemes was investing for the future of those schools and he felt that central Government was very backward in terms of such schemes.

The Educational Development Advisor - Sustainability noted that schools had independent budgets and would likely become more independent in the future, that therefore he would work with them where invited utilising whatever means available in terms of securing funds, such as Salix Finance as mentioned.

Councillor J Armstrong noted that he lived at Esh Village and was therefore knew of the excellent work carried out by OASES and at the EWE (Esh Winning Eco-Learning Centre) and Esh Winning Primary School and suggested that the new Committee after the Local Government elections may wish to undertake a site visit to see for themselves firsthand. The Educational Development Advisor - Sustainability noted this suggestion and added that a visit to Thorn at Spennymoor may also be beneficial for the Committee.

Councillor A Liversidge, while accepting the savings being made, noted that many people had complained as regards what they felt was a lesser quality of light from the new LED streetlights and therefore asked what could be learned from the LED lighting being used in schools as it was being described as of a higher quality. The Educational Development Advisor – Sustainability noted that internal LED lighting was different from external lighting, with also a focus to the external lighting, preventing light pollution. It was added that in Malmo, some schools were testing with different coloured LEDs to help engage learning and have a calming effect.

Councillor B Kellett noted that five new LED streetlights at a recent development near Ramside were marvellous and suggested that these may be of a new type.

The Chair thanked the Educational Development Advisor – Sustainability for a very interesting presentation and asked if he could return at some point in the future to provide detail of progress on the projects.

**Resolved:**

That the Committee note the wide range of initiatives being developed and offered to schools across the County and that the Committee receive a progress report to a future meeting to enable the Committee to monitor progress on projects.

## **7 Quarter 3 Forecast and Revenue and Capital Outturn 2016/17**

The Committee considered the report of the Regeneration and Local Services Management Team which set out details of the forecast outturn as at Quarter 3 for 2016/17 and highlighted variances against revenue and capital budgets for Neighbourhood Services. The Finance Manager, Resources – Regeneration and Local Services, Phillip Curran (for copies, see file of minutes).

Mr D Kinch asked as regards whether figures included the new waste transfer station at Barnard Castle. The Finance Manager, Resources – Regeneration and Local Services noted that the figures were just for 2016/17.

**Resolved:**

That the report be noted.

## **8 Quarter 3 Performance Management 2016/17**

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Management Team which presented progress against the Councils corporate basket of performance indicators for the Altogether Greener theme and report other significant performance issues for the second quarter of the 2016/17 financial year, covering the period October to December 2016 (for copy of report, see file of minutes)

The Customer Relations Policy and Performance Manager, Mary Readman gave a presentation which gave an update of the performance indicators relating to:

- Performance summary
- Achievements
- Refuse and Recycling
- Improved Environmental Cleanliness
- Fly-tipping
- Condition of the Local Authority road network
- Reduction in carbon emissions
- Renewable Energy Generation

*Councillor Joan Gray left at 10.15 am*

The Chairman thanked the Customer Relations Policy and Performance Manager and asked Members for their comments and questions.

Councillor P May noted the improvements to the Local Authority road network and asked whether now there could be improvements to the unclassified or estate roads, filling in potholes and such. The Customer Relations Policy and Performance Manager noted that it was dependent upon funds and weather conditions, as further investment may need to be made, however, the Head of Technical Services, John Reed would be the appropriate Officer to speak to Members in this regard.

Councillor O Millburn asked how dog fouling was monitored, noting that anecdotally it seemed to be on the increase. The Customer Relations Policy and Performance Manager explained that there were three surveys carried out annually looking at areas including residential, business and retail and assessing litter, detritus and dog fouling. It was added that whenever incidents were reported, the Neighbourhood Protection Team and Neighbourhood Wardens would look to investigate as appropriate.

Councillor J Clare noted that household waste was sometimes left on street corners and added he felt that this could be linked to education, awareness of the bulky household waste collection that the council offered, furniture schemes and ensuring people chose reputable tradespeople who dispose of their waste responsibly. Councillor J Armstrong agreed with Councillor J Clare that there was a need to educate, and to reiterate the message that individuals were responsible in terms of checking that anyone carrying out works for them had all the requisite permits in terms of waste disposal. He added that the use of household waste recycling centres was free for the disposal of domestic waste and that not all residents were aware of this. Councillor J Clark added that she felt that there needed to be wider publicity of a facility available on the Council's website whereby members of the public could upload photos of fly-tipping and this was useful in helping to investigate and secure convictions. The Customer Relations Policy and Performance Manager noted that the facility was being tested and added that it was important to help provide the Neighbourhood Protection Team with evidence to follow up, and to then prosecute offenders. Councillor J Clark noted that often people were reticent to come forward and provide a statement, however, would be likely to be willing to upload photos.

The Chairman noted that she felt it was important to try and educate parents, adding that at school closing time parents would often empty their cars of rubbish and this then becomes windblown and all over the area.

Councillor P May noted a serious fly-tipping incident in his Division and that in that case there had been an attempt to burn evidence, and that information from members of the public was vital in terms of tackling the issue. He added that the local AAP, environment groups, Parish Council, residents group all worked together to help in this regard and he added that the word was spreading amongst such groups of how to take action. Councillor P May added he would advise any Member to look to engage through their local AAP and neighbourhood groups on this issue.

The Customer Relations Policy and Performance Manager noted a Facebook page, separate from the Council's page, that highlighted recycling "do's and don'ts", which also set out facts to bust myths around these issues.

Mr D Kinch noted that the Neighbourhood Protection Manager, Ian Hoult had spoken to the Smaller Councils' Forum as regards training Town and Parish Council staff in how to issue Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) and that this training had been provided at no cost. He asked whether many had taken up this opportunity and if not could it be more publicised. The Customer Relations Policy and Performance Manager noted she would speak to the Neighbourhood Protection Manager. Mr T Bolton noted that speaking to Shildon Town Council, he had noted that two members of staff had been trained in how to issue PSPOs. Councillor J Armstrong added it would be interesting to see whether it would have an effect.

Councillor O Milburn noted she had tried to explain to her neighbour as regards 95% diversion from landfill and was not believed. She asked whether this figures could be displayed along the sides of the refuse vehicles to help educate the public on the excellent work of the Authority in this regard. The Customer Relations Policy and Performance Manager noted the performance information was made public and discussions were ongoing with the Head of Planning and Performance, Jenny Haworth as regards how best to get the information out to the public.

### **Resolved:**

That the report be noted.

## **9 Refresh of the Work Programme**

The Chairman asked the Overview and Scrutiny Officer, Ann Whitton to speak to Members in relation to the Council Plan 2016-2019 – Refresh of the Work Programme (for copy see file of minutes).

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer explained that the report highlighted work that had been undertaken by the Committee within the past year and also looked forward to seek suggestions from Members to be included within the Committee's work programme for the forthcoming year. Members were reminded that the aims and objectives were aligned to those of the Council Plan and associated plans, as well as the Altogether Greener priority theme.

It was explained that the work programme for 2017/18 would need to include further updates on a number of items considered in 2016/17, systematic reviews of recommendations in previous scrutiny review reports, focused scrutiny meetings and additional areas of overview activity.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer noted possible areas for review, however, a further report would come back to Committee in July for Members' consideration.

Councillor J Armstrong noted that this would be for the new Committee to determine in July, however, he agreed with Councillor G Holland in that the effect of the EU Referendum result would need to be taken into account. The Chairman added that many Officers who had spoken at Committee had highlighted Brexit as a risk.

Councillor J Clark noted in paragraph 11 that the Heritage Coast was not at the Derwent Valley and it was noted that this should have been in reference to the Land of Oak and Iron.

*Mr T Bolton left at 10.40 am*

The Chairman took the opportunity to thank all the Members for their hard work in terms of supporting the Committee and for their insightful questions and good debate. She added that she especially would like to thank Councillor G Holland who was not standing at the next election, and wished him all the best for the future. She added that as no one could be sure who would return after the election she wished everyone good luck.

Councillor J Armstrong reiterated the sentiments of the Chairman and added that the Officers supporting the Committee, and those that attended to provide information should also be commended for their hard work.

**Resolved:**

- (i) That the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the information contained in the Altogether Cleaner priority theme of the Council Plan 2016 -2019.
- (ii) That the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting on 14 July 2017, receive a further report detailing the Committee's Work Programme for 2017 -2018.