

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES AND PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the **Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in Committee Room 1, County Hall, Morpeth on Wednesday, 25 July 2018 at 2.00 p.m.

PRESENT

Councillor J. Reid
(Chairman, in the Chair)

COUNCILLORS

Beynon, J.
Cartie, E.
Dunbar, C.
Dunn, E.

Gallacher, B.
Gibson, R.
Pattison, W.
Swithenbank, I.C.F.

PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

Sanderson, H.G.H.

Environment and Local Services

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

P. Hedley
M. McCarty
D. Laux
D. Rumney
P. Simpson
M. Readman
S. Nicholson

Chief Fire Officer
Deputy Chief Fire Officer
Head of Technical Services
Principal Programme Officer
Public Health Protection Manager
Head of Customer Services
Scrutiny Co-ordinator

16. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor E. Armstrong.

17. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Communities and Place OSC held on 27 June 2018, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

18. FORWARD PLAN

The Scrutiny Co-ordinator presented the latest Forward Plan of key decisions (September - October 2018). (Forward Plan enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix A).

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

19. CABINET REPORTS PREVIOUSLY CONSIDERED BY THE COMMITTEE

The Scrutiny Co-ordinator advised members of Cabinet decisions regarding issues previously commented on and been subject of report by this Committee. (Report enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix B).

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

The Chairman advised the Committee that some Cabinet Members and officers had to leave the meeting early for other appointments. The following business is listed in the order they were discussed and not as they appeared on the agenda.

20. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REPORTS

20.1 Home Office Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services

This report was presented to the Committee by Paul Hedley, Chief Fire Officer and Mark McCarty, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, the purpose of which was to inform members of the inspection of the Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS), which would take place during autumn/winter of 2018. (Report enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix F).

The Committee recognised that this would be a very intensive process, but were assured that the Service was on course to complete the self assessment element in August 2018.

The Committee also sought assurance that the most senior elected members and officers of the Council be invited to attend the "hot debrief" at the end of the fieldwork week, to underline the Council's commitment to the Inspection process.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

20.2 Implementation of the Revised Highway Maintenance Code of Practice, "Well-managed Highway Infrastructure": Asset Performance and Financial Management, Priorities and Programme

This report was presented to the Committee by David Laux, Head of Technical Services, the purpose of which was to provide an overview of issues relating to

performance management and financial management arrangements, including how the Council's programmes were developed and prioritised. (Report enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix E).

Following the presentation, members made comment as follows:

- although highways were regularly inspected, public reporting of defects remained important as it was difficult to monitor the whole network, particularly where issues emerged in rural areas;
- members expressed concern regarding the impact trees had on some footpaths. Although Inspectors would investigate reported problems, remedial works were subject to prioritisation;
- the Council continued to promote cyclepaths. There were many cycling events held in the county which were well received;
- the flags to flex programme was no longer a separate operation, but was now part of the overall highways budget, and
- hand held technologies allowed Inspectors to cover greater areas as they were able to spend longer periods away from the office. Local members may be able to access defect data from those inspections if they were to contact the relevant Area Manager.

Councillor Sanderson advised the Committee that he felt that the LTP process was very clear, fair and transparent. The Council would continue to work with town and parish councils to assist them in identifying schemes that could be included in the LTP, including providing a clear explanation on the reasons why some schemes were not included.

RESOLVED that the

- (a) Committee's comments be noted and included in the revised Transport Asset Management Plan (TAMP), and
- (b) Committee agreed that approaches described in the report, adequately met the requirements of recommendations 26 to 31 within the revised Code.

20.3 The Green Dog Walkers Scheme and Dog Fouling Enforcement

This report was presented to the Committee by Peter Simpson, Public Health Protection Manager, the purpose of which was to update the Committee on the progress of the Green Dog Walker Scheme and also on dog control enforcement in 2017/18. (Report enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix D).

The Committee were advised that up to the date of the meeting, 1327 people had signed up to the Council's Green Dog Walkers Scheme, which had far exceeded the uptake predicted by colleagues at other authorities operating similar schemes.

Councillor Sanderson advised members that the scheme demonstrated that the Council was supportive of responsible dog owners, but warned that it was prepared to take action against those who were not.

The Committee welcomed the report and suggested that stalls promoting the scheme should be set up wherever fairs or fetes were being held in the county.

The Committee were advised that the scheme had been promoted across the county, including leaflets in vets surgeries. Members suggested that the Council's logo should be added to promotional material from animal charities that benefit from fines to further boost awareness of the scheme.

Members noted that Public Space Protection Orders put restrictions on dogs not on leads and that it was important that signage in those areas were prominently displayed. They also felt that signs should be erected in areas where fines had been imposed, setting out the number of those penalised in that vicinity, to further encourage owners to clean up after their dogs.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

21. SCRUTINY OF CABINET REPORTS

21.1 Food and Feed, Safety and Standards Service Plan 2018/19

This report was presented to the Committee by Peter Simpson, Public Health Protection Manager, the purpose of which was to present to the Cabinet, the Food and Feed, Safety and Standards Service Plan for 2018/19. (Report enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix C).

The Committee welcomed the report, noting that the benchmarking information that they had requested in the previous year had been included, which they had found to be useful in measuring performance.

Although members noted that the number of food standards complaints had risen during last year, they were advised that the type of complaints had not, suggesting that public awareness of their rights and how to complain may have accounted for the increase.

With regard to making a food premise hygiene complaint, the Committee were advised that an officer from the Public Protection Commercial Team would contact the complainant within three working days.

RESOLVED that the Chairman advise the Cabinet that the Committee supports the recommendations contained in the report.

22. REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATOR

Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

The Scrutiny Co-ordinator presented the Committee's Work Programme for 2018/19. (Report enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix G).

The Chairman introduced Mary Readman, Head of Customer Services who was new in post. She reported that she was in the process of evaluating the work of customer services within the Council and would welcome member input in that process.

With regard to the Market Strategy which the Committee commented on at the previous meeting prior to its approval at Cabinet on 10 July, members requested that they be updated on the implementation of the Strategy early in 2019.

RESOLVED that the work programme be noted.

23. INFORMATION REPORT - POLICY DIGEST

The Scrutiny Co-ordinator advised the Committee that the Policy Digest gave details of the latest policy briefings, government announcements and ministerial speeches which may be of interest to members. The report could be accessed through the service finder element of County Council's website at www.northumberland.gov.uk.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Chairman _____

Date _____