

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, 2 October 2019 at 2.00 p.m.

PRESENT

Councillor B. Gallacher
(Vice-Chairman, in the Chair)

COUNCILLORS

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

Dunn, E.
Gibson, R.
Pattison, W.
Swithenbank, I.C.F.

CABINET MEMBER

Sanderson, H.G.H.

Environment and Local Services

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

D. Laux
L. Ryan
S. Nicholson

Head of Technical Services
Network Manager
Scrutiny Co-ordinator

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19. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors J. Reid.

20. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Communities and Place OSC held on 30 August 2019, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

21. FORWARD PLAN OF CABINET DECISIONS

The Committee considered the Forward Plan of key decisions (October to December 2019). (Schedule enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix A).

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

22. CABINET REPORTS PREVIOUSLY CONSIDERED BY THE COMMITTEE

The Committee was advised of Cabinet decisions regarding issues previously commented on and been subject of report by this Committee. (Copy enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix B).

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

23. SCRUTINY OF CABINET REPORTS

The Committee were advised that the following report would be considered by the Cabinet on 12 November 2019. Members were requested to comment on the proposals in the report.

The proposed implementation of the Northumberland Street Works Permit Scheme

This report provided information on the proposed Northumberland Street Works Permit Scheme. (Report enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix C).

The Committee were advised that its views were being sought as part of the consultation into the proposed permit scheme.

Members supported the proposals as they believed that the scheme would limit disruption to the highway network, if utility companies were charged for works to be carried out. They were further reassured that the Council would have greater control on the level of works, including timescales, as part of the permission process.

The Committee were advised that the scheme could not make a profit, as Government guidelines insisted that it must be cost neutral, although fixed penalty notices could be issued if users failed to comply with the conditions attached to the granting of a permit. There was also a discussion on how frequently the scheme could be reviewed, but again members were advised that this was also laid down in the regulations.

The Committee also discussed the quality of the reinstatement works to the highway undertaken by the utility companies and suggested that on occasions it could be relatively poor. Members were advised that such works were examined by our own Highway Inspectors and had to meet national standards, although not necessarily as high a standard as the Council would complete. Such works were subject to a warranty period of typically two to three years.

RESOLVED that, subject to the comments above, the Cabinet be advised that the Committee supported the recommendation in the report.

24. REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATOR

Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee Monitoring Report

The Committee reviewed and noted its work programme for the 2019/20 council year. (Report attached to the signed minutes as Appendix D).

The Scrutiny Co-ordinator reported that the Government had issued new guidance on overview and scrutiny, which followed the findings of the House of Commons - Communities and Local Government Committee: Effectiveness of Local Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committees Report December 2017. The implications of which would be considered in a report to Cabinet on 8 October 2019.

The guidance highlighted the need for members to have the necessary support to properly carry out the scrutiny function and as a consequence, a Scrutiny Officer had already been appointed to help provide that support and would take up the post ahead of the November round of meetings.

The guidance also reinforced the notion that the Overview and Scrutiny Committees set their own work programmes. The Scrutiny Co-ordinator advised members that if they wanted the Committee to examine a particular issue, they should contact him or the Chairman or Vice-Chairman for consideration.

Members then raised the following issues for possible inclusion on the Committee's work programme:

- the Council's response to anti-social behaviour, and
- the bidding process for Council owned residential properties.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Chairman _____

Date _____