

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, 27 June 2018 at 2.00 p.m.

PRESENT

Councillor J. Reid
(Chairman, in the Chair)

COUNCILLORS

Beynon, J.
Cartie, E.
Dunn, E.

Gallacher, B.
Gibson, R.
Pattison, W.

PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

Sanderson, H.G.H.

Environment and Local Services

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

P. Johnston
G. Gavin
D. Laux
D. Rumney
S. Nicholson

Interim Executive Director: Place
Head of Neighbourhood Services
Head of Technical Services
Principal Programme Officer
Scrutiny Co-ordinator

9. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors E. Armstrong, C. Dunbar and I. Swithenbank.

10. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Communities and Place OSC held on 8 June 2018, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

11. FORWARD PLAN

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

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

12. SCRUTINY OF CABINET REPORTS

12.1 Markets Strategy

This report was presented to the Committee by Glen Sanderson, Cabinet Member for Environment and Local Services and Greg Gavin, Head of Neighbourhood Services.

The Committee were advised that the report would be considered by the Cabinet on 10 July 2018, providing an update on achievements against the 2010 - 15 strategy action plan, an update on the process taken to review the strategy and would seek approval of the proposed Markets Strategy 2018 - 2023. (Report enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix B).

Following the presentation members made the following comments on the report and draft strategy:

- although the Committee generally acknowledged that markets attracted many visitors into towns, members were concerned that in some areas, they may have had an adverse impact on existing permanent retail units;
- members felt that market traders should be obliged to remain on site for set times, rather than packing up after the “busy period” had elapsed;
- some markets in other areas, included more robust pod-like stalls that seemed to be weather resistant. Members suggested that officers examine the feasibility of acquiring such units for use by traders in the county;
- Teenage Markets had proven to be quite popular in the north of the county and should be expanded to other areas. Members agreed that live acoustic music had been an attraction at such events and should be encouraged at other markets;
- there was concern that traders were parking their vehicles at inappropriate locations and members requested that parking restrictions should be enforced on such occasions, as appropriate;
- with regard to greater innovation in the draft strategy, members were advised that it was proposed that officers engaged with traders to develop their digital skills to help them improve promotional material and to enable them to trade online where appropriate. In the past, traders had been offered support in preparing business plans, but this initiative had not been widely accepted by

them, so it was hoped that this new opportunity would be better received, and

- the strategy, if approved, would be under continued review to ensure that standards did not deteriorate and where possible, be improved as the situation demanded.

The Committee noted that 'Operating Rules for Markets' had not been circulated with the draft Strategy, but that members would receive a copy following the meeting. This document set out of the regulations governing the use of market pitches by traders in all market places in the county, including market days and times; fees; occupation of the pitch and other rules of operation.

RESOLVED that the Chairman present the Committee's comments, as set out above, to the Cabinet on 10 July 2018 during their consideration of this report.

13. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REPORTS

13.1 Fly Tipping

This report was presented to the Committee by Glen Sanderson, Cabinet Member for Environment and Local Services and Greg Gavin, Head of Neighbourhood Services.

The report set out the recent trends in the level of fly tipping both nationally and within Northumberland, paying particular attention to any implications relating to the change in the opening days at 5 Household Waste Recovery Centres (HWRCs) introduced in October 2016 as part of the revenue budget savings for 2016/17. (Report enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix C).

The Committee noted that the changes in opening times had not resulted in a reduction of the quantity of waste delivered to HWRCs and that concerns that the changes would lead to widespread fly tipping had not been realised. Members suggested that there may be some confusion among the public regarding what could be freely disposed of at the HWRCs, which had resulted in some disputes with staff. Although the Committee acknowledged that staff at the HWRCs were generally very helpful, any reported incidents where this was not found to be the case would be investigated. In the meantime, a campaign was being developed to promote recycling, including at HWRCs.

The bulky waste scheme continued to be popular with residents.

The committee also commented that although the reduction in opening times of the HWRCs had not resulted in an increase in fly tipping, the Administration should think very carefully before reducing opening hours further, as there was no guarantee that future reductions in operating times would not result in higher incidents of fly tipping.

Councillor Sanderson reported that littering was a big problem in the county, which was costly to combat. He suggested that the issue should be widely publicised

asking residents “why would you spoil your county”. The Committee supported any measures which deterred littering, including encouraging those witnessing incidents to report them to the Council via the online portal or through the call centre. Littering from cars could be traced using the car registration number, which could result in a fine issued to the owner. Dashcams had been installed in some Council vehicles which could be used to detect littering and it was anticipated that this would be rolled out further as the fleet was replaced.

RESOLVED that

- (a) the report be noted;
- (b) the HWRC opening arrangements and the work the Council undertakes to raise awareness of its waste services, the legal obligations that all waste producers have to ensure their waste is legally disposed of and the Council’s on-going enforcement activity to ensure those responsible for flytipping are held to account for their actions, be supported, and
- (c) the Council’s initiatives to reduce littering in the county be supported.

13.2 Implementation of the Revised Highway Maintenance Code of Practice, “Well-Managed Highway Infrastructure”: A Risk Based Approach to Highway Management and Feedback on Network Hierarchy Consultation

This report was presented to the Committee by Glen Sanderson, Cabinet Member for Environment and Local Services and David Laux, Head of Technical Services.

The report set out how the Council intended to update the risk based highway defect management inspection regime taking account of the revised code of practice. It also provided an update on the outcome of the recent consultation that had taken place with key stakeholders regarding the network hierarchy. (Report enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix D).

The Committee were advised that the Council sought to inspect minor roads more often and to respond to defects more quickly.

The Committee welcomed the resurfacing works that were being undertaken, which appeared to be of a good standard. Members requested that parish and town councils be advised of issues detected in their areas (carriageway or footpaths); of any proposed remedial works, and when such works had been completed.

The Committee were advised that 84 bridges in the county had failed their structural assessment and had been included on the interim measures list. The street lighting annual inspection scheme had been suspended due to the modernisation programme.

The use of cameras on council vehicles to detect defects was being trialled in other parts of the country and the outcomes would be monitored.

There was a suggestion that third party defect reporting could lead to duplication if the same issue was reported several times, but the Committee were advised that such incidents would be discerned at the inspection stage.

Members suggested that the response and repair regime be more widely publicised to encourage public reporting of potholes and other issues.

RESOLVED that

- (a) the Committee's comments be noted, and
- (b) the response to the highway network hierarchy consultation, be noted.

14. 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 E).

RESOLVED that the changes to the work programme be noted.

15. 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 _____