

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, 6 February 2019 at 2.00 p.m.

PRESENT

Councillor J. Reid
(Chairman, in the Chair)

COUNCILLORS

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

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

CABINET MEMBERS

Riddle, J.
Sanderson, H.G.H.

Planning, Housing and Resilience
Environment and Local Services

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

P. Johnston
P. Jones
S. Nicholson

Interim Executive Director of Place
Service Director - Local Services
Scrutiny Co-ordinator

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45. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor E. Cartie.

46. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Communities and Place OSC held on 5 December 2018, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

47. SCRUTINY OF CABINET REPORTS

The Committee were advised that the following reports would be considered by the Cabinet on 12 February 2019. The Committee's comments would be presented to the Cabinet by the Chairman when it determined the reports.

47.1 Review of Waste Strategy - Kerbside Collection of Household Waste

This report would provide Cabinet with an outline of the modelling and options appraisal work undertaken in 2018 in order to review and update the Council's Municipal Waste Management Strategy 2003 - 2020. The modelling work evaluated the current kerbside collection service delivered to Northumberland residents, and identified and evaluates alternative approaches in order to 'shortlist' options for further, more detailed modelling and evaluation. (Report enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix A).

The report was presented by Councillor Glen Sanderson, Cabinet Member: Environment and Local Services, supported by Paul Johnston and Paul Jones.

The Committee supported the Administration's ambition to achieve a recycle rate of above 50% and welcomed proposals to collaborate with the other North of Tyne Councils to rollout enhanced recycling schemes. Although members noted that they would have the opportunity to comment on the detail of the Administration's preferred options later in the year, they sought clarification and made comment as follows:

- there was a suggestion that consideration be given to the criteria used to allocate larger domestic bins. Members were advised however, that as it was assumed that more waste would be recycled, there would be little need for bigger bins;
- there needed to be a continuous programme of promoting what items could be recycled, such as picture stickers on bins;
- glass left for collection should be in lidded containers;
- concern was expressed that increased charges for the collection of garden waste may have an adverse impact on take up of the scheme. Members were advised that the Council's charges were around the national average and certainly by no means the highest;
- consideration be given to the provision of more community skips for both general waste and glass;
- the Council's fleet included vehicles able to collect glass without incurring the 'wear and tear' that would impact waste refuse trucks if they were used, and
- new residential developments should include provision for the increase in the number of bins required for each property.

Councillor Sanderson invited the Committee to visit the West Sleekburn Integrated Waste Management Facility to observe the recycling process at the plant.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet be advised that the Committee supports the recommendations in the report.

47.2 Proposed Introduction of Charges at Tourism and Railway Station Car Parks - Consultations Response

The purpose of this report was to provide feedback to the Cabinet on the outcome of the consultation exercise regarding the proposed increase to some existing car parking charges and introduction of parking charges at selected tourism/coastal, railway station car parks and at Tyne Riverside Country Park car park in Prudhoe. The report summarised the main issues raised during the consultation exercise and the Council's response to those issues and made recommendations for refinements to the proposals in light of the consultation feedback. (Report enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix B).

The report was presented by Councillor Glen Sanderson, Cabinet Member: Environment and Local Services, supported by Paul Johnston and Paul Jones.

Councillor Sanderson confirmed that the Administration had no plans to re-open this issue in the future, however he was hopeful that a proposal to provide parking at the former Goosehill School site in Morpeth could be realised by next winter.

The Chairman referred to recommendation 4 in the report and suggested that it should be amended, so that reference be made to ensuring that Town and Parish Councils be advised of any future changes to the operation of car parks within their area, prior to any public consultation.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet be advised of the Committee's comments regarding the consultation with Town and Parish Councils as set out above,

48. COMMUNITIES AND PLACE PERFORMANCE

This report provided information about the operational performance of services that were within the scope of the Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The report aimed to provide assurance that action was being taken to mitigate the risk of underperformance and to address deteriorating trends. (Report enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix C).

The report was presented by Councillor John Riddle, Cabinet Member: Planning, Housing and Resilience and Councillor Glen Sanderson, Cabinet Member: Environment and Local Services, supported by Paul Johnston and Paul Jones.

The Committee sought clarification on the inclusion of some of the data, particularly those which members felt that it was unfair that the Council be held to account, such as deliberate primary fires in vehicles and the number of private sector dwellings vacant for more than six months, and also made the following comments:

Metric 6, 8 & 9: There was discussion regarding the comment that action should be taken to minimise member call-ins, as it was felt that Councillors should be able to determine planning applications based on local knowledge and experience, rather than being concerned that their decisions may be referred to the Planning Inspectorate. Councillor Riddle confirmed that this was about ensuring that members were properly trained to deal with planning issues. However, it was agreed that a schedule of delegated planning decisions be circulated to Local Area Council Planning Chairs. Members also felt that the Council needed to be more robust when dealing with enforcement issues.

Metric 25: members expressed concern regarding the impact universal credit would have on tenant arrears. Councillor Riddle assured members that the Council's collection rate was better than most other local authorities and believed that the target was manageable.

Metric 39: members felt that the Council should do more to publicise the number of fixed penalty notice for dog fouling, particularly in the locations where they had been issued.

Metric 47: members wondered whether this measure should be included as a key indicator. However, they agreed that it would be useful to receive a breakdown of the requests made to the Public Protection Service at a future meeting.

Metric 51: the Committee were impressed at the actions taken by the Fire and Rescue Service in fitting smoke alarms in some homes and continuing to promote their importance of such devices in domestic premises.

RESOLVED that

- (a) the report be noted;
- (b) a further update be provided to the Committee on Public Protection Service requests at a future meeting, and
- (c) the Committee continues to receive this report on an annual basis.

49. 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 D).

RESOLVED that the work programme be noted.

50. 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 _____