

## **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, 5 February 2020 at 2.00 p.m.

#### **PRESENT**

Councillor J.Reid  
(Chair, in the Chair)

#### **MEMBERS**

Armstrong, E.  
Beynon, J.  
Dunbar, C

Gallacher, B.  
Gibson, R.  
Hepple, A.

#### **CABINET MEMBER**

Sanderson, H.G.H.

Environment and Local Services

#### **OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE**

G. Gavin  
S.Nicholson  
D. Roberston  
N. Turnbull

Head of Neighbourhood Services  
Scrutiny Co-Ordinator  
Fleet Manager  
Democratic Services Officer

1 Press

#### **37. MEMBERSHIP**

The Committee was advised that Councillor A. Hepple had replaced Councillor I.C.F. Swithenbank as a member of the Committee.

#### **38. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Cartie, Dunn and Pattison.

### **39. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Communities and Place OSC held on 4 December 2019, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

### **40. FORWARD PLAN OF CABINET DECISIONS**

The Committee considered the Forward Plan of key decisions (February to May 2020). (Schedule enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix A).

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

### **41. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REPORTS**

#### **41.1 Update on the Fleet Replacement Programme for 2019/20**

The report provided an update on progress made with the delivery of the Council's fleet replacement programme for 2019/20. (Report enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix B).

The Chair thanked the Fleet Manager for the clear and well written report.

The Fleet Manager explained that main reasons for slippage of the programme were due to manufacturer delays or development of a business case for more electric vehicles in conjunction with the Council's Improvement and Innovation Team.

Clarification was provided on the following issues:

- Vehicles in urgent need of replacement would not be delayed by the electric vehicle review to ensure that service delivery was not impacted. The remaining £2.5 million of the 2019/20 budget for the replacement of these vehicles would be reprofiled into 2020/21.
- The Council participated in a number of purchasing networks which enabled discounts from bulk buying with other organisations.
- Vehicles were not shared with other organisations. Occasionally vehicles had been purchased for another body or leased to another local authority, for a short period, when not in use by the Council.
- The Green Fleet Review was being undertaken by the Energy Savings Trust at no charge, the only cost was officer time. A detailed report was expected in February 2020.
- Officers were working with the Improvement and Innovation Team regarding the business case for more electric vehicles. This included the infrastructure at the depots as some would require additional electrical capacity. The team were also reviewing public charging points following a further allocation of £0.5 million. Whilst everyone was in favour of more electric charging points, there was also an awareness of rapidly changing

technology and not investing in equipment which would be obsolete within a short period of time.

- Fuel for existing vehicles was obtained from depots and monitored via a fob. The fuel was purchased at a discounted price via a NEPO agreement which was reviewed every 2 years. In rural areas, fuel could be purchased from the majority of garages with a fuel card when it would not be advantageous to travel to a depot due to the mileage involved.
- A review was also being carried out on the 'grey' fleet and mileage by officers in their own vehicles to determine whether more electric pool cars should be acquired.
- There would be a re-tender exercise for the replacement of the traffic management vehicles outlined in paragraph 9. Additional vehicles would be hired in, if required, to ensure there was no impact on the service.
- The electric alternatives available for larger vehicles such as refuse vehicles and gritters were being monitored. Previously the vehicles available did not provide the range required in the county, but this was improving.
- An operational assessment was carried out on vehicles due for replacement. Any vehicle over 5 years old which did not have high mileage and was in good condition could be retained for a longer period whilst some younger vehicles, with high mileage and high repair bills were returned sooner.
- Specialist vehicles had been purchased to assist with road maintenance and repairs when this was more cost effective than using contractors.
- A visit for Members would be arranged in Autumn 2020 to view vehicles in the fleet prior to the 2020 winter season.
- The number of domestic refuse routes had been increased in 2018 to take into account new housing developments and future demands on the service.

Members requested that consideration be given to:

- Ethical disposal of all vehicles when no longer required by the Council so any environmental benefits whilst in the Council's ownership were not undone.
- Planning required to meet the government's recent announcement on bringing forward to 2035 the ban on the sale of new petrol and diesel cars.
- Contingency plans be reviewed to take into account a mass scale power failure, if a significant proportion of the fleet became electric.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Local Services expressed his appreciation to all members of staff in Local Services who maintained and drove vehicles in difficult weather conditions to ensure the Council was able to provide its essential services.

**RESOLVED** that the work undertaken to deliver the challenging fleet replacement programme during 2019/20, be noted.

## 42. REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATOR

### **Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee Monitoring Report**

The Committee reviewed its work programme for the 2019/20 council year. (Report enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix C).

The Scrutiny Co-ordinator reported that the Performance report had been deferred and would be considered at a future meeting. The Executive Directors had agreed that, following a repeat of issues noted last year, some of key performance indicators needed to be reviewed as there were factors outside the control of Local Services.

As the Committee was approaching the final year of this administrative cycle, any Member seeking an update or reassurance on action following consideration of previous reports, were requested to highlight them to the Chair, Vice-Chair or Scrutiny Co-ordinator.

Members requested reports on:

- Housing Allocation
- Fire and Rescue Improvement Plan

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

**CHAIR** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE** \_\_\_\_\_