

## NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

### CRAMLINGTON, BEDLINGTON AND SEATON VALLEY LOCAL AREA COUNCIL

At a virtual meeting of **Cramlington, Bedlington and Seaton Valley Local Area Council** held on Wednesday, 18 November 2020 at 2:00 pm.

#### PRESENT

Councillor C Dunbar, Chair in the Chair

#### MEMBERS

L Bowman  
W Crosby  
W Daley  
S E Dungworth  
B Flux

M Robinson  
M Swinburn  
I C F Swithenbank  
R Wallace

#### OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

H Bowers  
J Brown  
M Carle  
T Gribbin  
P Jones  
R O'Farrell

Democratic Services Officer  
Public Health Consultant  
Highways Delivery Manager  
Neighbourhood Services Manager  
Local Services Director  
Corporate Resources Executive  
Director

#### 78. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Hepple and Richards.

#### 79. MINUTES

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of Cramlington, Bedlington and Seaton Valley Local Area Council held on Wednesday, 26 February 2020, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

The Chair explained that the order of the agenda would be amended to allow Councillor questions and officers to attend other meetings.

Ch.'s Initials.....

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## 80. MEMBER'S QUESTIONS

Councillor Dungworth referred to the change in the timing of the local area council meetings without the consultation of councillors and members of the public and questioned why members of the public were not allowed to participate in virtual meetings. The Business Chair noted the comments and explained that this would be discussed at the next Local Area Chairs Briefing meeting and a response would be fed back.

Some discussion also took place on the creation of a new working group and it was requested that details be shared with other members.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

## 81. LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN PROGRAMME 2020-21 - CAPITAL PROGRAMME UPDATE

Members received a report which set out details of the approved Local Transport Plan (LTP) programme for 2020/21. (Report enclosed as Appendix B)

The Local Services Director gave a countywide overview of work up to date:

- The funding available for the LTP Programme 2020/21 was £18.591m
- The Council had also made an additional capital investment of £15m for the maintenance of U and C roads and footways.
- During the summer, the Council had been awarded an additional £11.421m in capital grant funding from the Department of Transport (DfT)
- £3.7m had also been awarded as a Challenge Fund by the DfT towards an overall £4.8m Steel Bridge refurbishment Programme, which would allow for the refurbishment of 8 bridges across the county.
- Overall the capital programme was over £42m which was quite significant
- The pandemic had resulted in some delays to the delivery of the programme with capital works being suspended and focus on ensuring emergency and reactive repairs being carried out safely
- Teams had worked hard from Managers down to front line staff, adapting working methods with machinery and undertaking risk assessments
- Some surface dressing works had been carried out at the beginning of June and recommenced at the end of June due to Covid-19
- In excess of 40 miles were due to be resurfaced across the county this year and as at the end of September, 12 miles had been delivered. 52 out of 168 roads included schemes in the Cramlington/Seaton Valley/Bedlington local authority areas including the A192 and A193 and it was hoped to complete the programme within the financial year.
- A Surface dressing programme of £4.7m had been completed covering 48 miles primarily for rural roads and would include East Cramlington

- 10 miles of micro surfacing had also been completed on urban and residential roads, which included 7 schemes in Cramlington, Seghill and Bedlington areas
- Walking and cycling schemes had been undertaken with a major scheme at Kirkhaugh footbridge and significant improvements had been carried out in Cramlington for cyclists
- A number of bridge projects had recently been completed in the South Tyne Valley and other bridge works in Felton and Berwick
- The scheduled ancient monument schemes had been granted by Historic England and the initial phase of major refurbishment works to Berwick Old Bridge had started in October
- The scheme to conserve the Union Chain Bridge had also commenced
- Work was underway on the Steel Bridge Refurbishment programme with specialist paint work contractors
- Landslip repair projects had recently been completed at Warden, Wylam, Morpeth and Ovingham and work also being carried out for a long term solution to the B6344 at Weldon Bridge to Rothbury which had been a long standing issue
- A number of road safety schemes had been implemented in Prudhoe and Bedlington, with new footways in Embleton village
- High risk sites schemes had also been completed at A1167 at Berwick and Bamburgh
- 20 mph limits at schools had been fully introduced at 4 locations, with a further 8 issued and a remaining 40 schemes in progress
- A major scheme had been carried out at Callerton Lane, Ponteland for a schools and leisure project which had incorporated Environment Agency improvements to reduce flood risk
- Despite delays caused by the pandemic, staff and managers had worked extremely hard to deliver the programme on top of other duties undertaken including the delivery of food parcels, implementing measures for enhanced social distancing and assisting with the establishment of mobile and Covid-19 testing sites

The Chair stated that it had been a challenging year and thanked Mr Jones for the delivery of the plan. The work of the team was recognised and thanks conveyed to the Local Services team.

The Service Director – Local Services provided the following information in answer to questions from members:

- In response to a more tailored report; The purpose of the LTP report was to ensure members were aware of what was going on countywide and the comments would be taken on board.
- Regarding demarcation and surface dressing; The issue with lines and signs had been recognised and repaired in the past through revenue budgets, which had been challenging. There was an allocation in the current LTP programme for line and sign replacement.

**RESOLVED** that the update be noted.

## **82. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

A question had been submitted by Mr Jonathan Willis as follows:

“What is the process for the registration and management of the boats that are in and out of the water in Seaton Sluice harbour? Is there defined process and how are the metrics for boat numbers and associated fees audited? It seems apparent that this is an ‘out of control’ process with boats, debris and rubbish being allowed to be dumped around the ‘3 corner green’ down from the Melton Constable to the detriment of the overall area. I am aware of on-going actions by NCC but the reality is that the actions are not timely and that the situation continues to decline. I have no objection to boats in the harbour area as long as the process is controlled and does not impact the overall area.”

A response was provided as follows:

“Boat owners wishing to store, moor or launch boats from Seaton Sluice must apply to Northumberland County Council for a permit. All applications are directed to and dealt with by the Green Spaces Officer for a permit. All Boat owners are invoiced annually. Officers ensure that abandoned boats or equipment are removed from the site. The process for permit applications is outlined above. The number of permit holders and fees paid are not currently subject to a formal audit process. The site is controlled and managed by the County Council. Conditions apply to permits and measures are in place to deal with non-compliance. Actions are being taken and have been taken to deal with abandoned boats and trailers and other debris. Officers are currently considering a number of proposed improvements to the management and operation of the site.”

## **83. PETITIONS**

There had been no petitions submitted since the previous meeting, no reports for consideration and no updates to be provided.

## **84. LOCAL SERVICES ISSUES**

The Neighbourhood Services Area Manager and Highways Delivery Area Manager were in attendance to provide verbal updates about any key recent, ongoing and/or future planned Local Services work and to respond to issues raised by members.

### Neighbourhood Services

Tony Gribbin, Neighbourhood Services Manager, explained the impact of Covid on front line services and the measures taken to protect staff while still delivering a high quality service to the public.

- Initially accessing PPE had been a challenge, officers had initially worked with multiple suppliers then collaborated with colleagues in the corporate centre to source equipment and sanitiser.
- Risk assessments and safe systems of work were developed to provide a safe and COVID compliant environment for staff; depots were assessed, advisory signage introduced, wall mounted sanitiser units installed, depot inspections on a weekly basis, desks taken out of use, maximum room occupancy introduced, mandatory face coverings used in communal areas etc.
- There were staggered start/finish times for teams and a one-way system in all buildings to manage movement of large staff numbers within the depot.
- Social distancing protocols were created for staff working in teams; a fleet of vehicles was hired to ensure social distancing was observed; screens were fitted inside vehicles to enable the NEAT teams to work safely.
- Agency staff had been brought in to bolster the workforce and cover absence and increased workloads.
- Additional refuse vehicles had been hired for the collection of additional tonnage generated by high numbers of people working from home.
- There had been enhanced toilet cleaning 3 times per day, queuing systems, one-way systems, advisory signage etc to protect residents or visitors to Northumberland.
- Grounds maintenance services had been suspended on 23 March 2020 and were reinstated from 25 March 2020; play areas and toilets had been closed for a further period but are now open. These were reinstated due to the importance of a clean and tidy environment for people to enjoy and cater for those spending time outdoors.
- The number of deaths were monitored and staffing levels managed in crematorium and cemeteries accordingly.

#### Grounds Maintenance:

- **Grass cutting** was under continuous review. There had been some challenging periods due to near perfect growing conditions but the team had recovered well and ended the season with the grass at the expected standard. In all areas core cuts were completed and most additional cuts achieved.
- **Street Sweeping** was being carried out on leaf hotspot areas to attempt to prevent localised flooding.
- **Winter Works Programme** had commenced, and core works would be carried out first followed by prioritised requests and every effort would be made to get through as much as possible.
- **Waste Services** were all operating well other than a few minor vehicle breakdowns, staffing shortages and Covid restrictions. Garden waste collections were operating well and would end at the end of November/beginning of December. Teams would continue to review existing collection rounds in order to cope with ongoing housing growth as well as continued growth in take up of the garden waste service. A glass recycling scheme had commenced in Bedlington, Alnwick, Lesbury, Hexham and Morpeth which had gone well.

In addition, war memorials had been attended to ensure they were up to condition for anyone wishing to pay their respects on Remembrance Day.

Gardening services had been suspended due to Covid, but 11 Green Flag Awards had been regained in Astley Park, Dr Pitt and Plessey Woods which was testimony to the front line team.

The Chair congratulated the service and teams for the all the work carried out during the pandemic and this was echoed by members.

Questions and comments were invited:

- A member praised the bin collection service for going out of their way to help a resident
- In response to a query regarding alternative schemes for weed spraying, it was advised that alternative methods and schemes had been looked at
- Regarding a food waste scheme, members were advised that a Waste Strategy report had been presented to Scrutiny and Cabinet earlier in the year and modelling and cost implications had been undertaken. Significant capital investment was required, and legislation was awaited from the Government which would drive available funding. It was hoped that this would be finalised by the end of 2021.
- Regarding fly-tipping investigations. Mr Gribbin stated that that was an enforcement issue and a response would be provided to Democratic Services
- The service was praised for their help regarding bonfires, which was a yearly issue
- Mr Gribbin would speak to colleagues and provide a response relating to trees covering lighting columns in Bedlington

### **Technical Services**

Michael Carle, Highways Delivery Area Manager, provided an update on maintenance and capital:

#### **Maintenance**

Statutory functions had been carried out throughout Covid lockdowns from March and had been delivered in a Covid safe way. Slight variations had been made as to how changes were approached to ensure staff and public safety was adhered to. Maintenance functions had been delivered to a very high standard.

#### **Highways Capital Completed Work**

A large amount of funding had been received through various streams in the South East.

Northumberland County Council Highways department had recently carried out a resurfacing programme on the A193 Beresford Road, Seaton Sluice. Stead Lane, St John's Crescent, The Riggs, Elenbell Avenue, Poplar Grove, Deanery Street, Hassop

Way and Glassop Way, Bedlington. Westmorland Way, Southfield Lea, Cramlington and the A192 East Hartford Roundabout.

Tarmac patching had been carried out at Mountford Road and Gloucester Street, New Hartley. Chester Grove, Seghill. Tillmouth Avenue, Moorland Way and cycle tracks at Parkside and Faversham Road, Cramlington. Newburgh Avenue, Seaton Delaval and Moorland Avenue and Hollymount Square, Bedlington.

Drainage improvements had been carried out on the A192 Cramlington. Glassey Terrace and Jubilee Terrace, Bedlington and the A1068 Aerodrome roundabout and Fisher Lane, Cramlington.

Two micro surfacing programmes had been completed in Avenue Road and Chester Grove, Seghill; Garforth Close, Glencoe Avenue, Gresham Close and Windborough Drive, Cramlington and Carisbrooke, Bedlington

### **Upcoming Work**

Tarmac work was scheduled for Thornhill Close, Seaton Delaval, Sudbury Way and Fisher Lane, Cramlington; Roslin Park, Bedlington and Melrose Villas, Ashington and resurfacing works at Blagdon Terrace area, Cramlington.

Works were currently taking place on 'Hedge to Hedge' vegetation clearance schemes across the South East which involved cutting back vegetation, footpath and carriageway scraping, fixing drainage and cleaning drainage channel issues. Several sites were programmed in the Seaton Delaval, Cramlington and Bedlington wards.

The NCC Sign Shop based at Stakeford depot had shown its true value to the authority by producing phenomenal amounts of Covid related signage for both external and internal sites as well as stickers for offices. This was in addition to their existing internal and external workload.

Traffic Management teams had been exceptional in the early days of the first lockdown closing car parks and erecting VMS data board and signage and had assisted in delivering a large programme of works. From a personal perspective, Mr Carle praised all the Highways Team, especially the South East managers and workforce from March to the present day. They continued to adapt and change from their day job to deliver food parcels, PPE, magazines and back again to their day job, which had been seamless and the way they had adapted to COVID safe ways of working for their staff had been exemplary.

Questions and comments were invited:

- Regarding micro surfacing at Acomb Avenue, Mr Carle would check this out and chase up the fence damage at Seaton Delaval roundabout

- In response to a query regarding cycle path schemes at Parkside/Eastfield, and damaged signs at Northumbrian Road, the issues would be raised and addressed
- In relation to poor lighting in underpasses, Mr Carle would follow this up with colleagues in Street Lighting

## 85. COVID UPDATE

Dr Jim Brown, NCC Public Health Consultant, provided a verbal update as follows:

- There had been a rapid increase of 7-day rates of COVID infection throughout September in Northumberland. This had plateaued during October with a small increase towards the end of October.
- Up to 16 November, there had been an increase of 280 per 100,000 and 899 cases in the last 7 days.
- The South East and North of Northumberland, had seen some of the highest rates
- The Cramlington, Bedlington and Seaton Valley areas had seen 273 cases per 100,000, 176 cases. The highest rate had been in the 50 to 59 year olds
- The area had the highest testing rate but the lowest positivity rate
- There had been an increase of cases in care homes and schools
- There were 4 wraparound groups for the outbreak control plan to support different sectors in preventing outbreaks – care homes and care settings, workplaces and businesses, educational settings and high-risk individuals and settings.
- Hospitals had seen an increase in admissions in the last week. Elective care was being continued but reviewed on a daily basis
- A Care Home Visiting Policy had been issued to care homes in line with national guidance
- There were developments to bring in NHS test and trace capacity to the North East and around NHS testing for visiting professionals to care homes, mass testing to enable daily testing of care home staff and testing for designated visitors.
- Visiting policy to care homes had been issued in line with national guidance in order to provide some reassurance to care homes.
- A huge amount of work had been done around communications, locally and regionally, to understand behaviours and to develop interventions and campaigns.
- Work to develop COVID champions, people in the community who would spread messages about social distancing, wearing facemasks, handwashing and following all other guidance around restrictions in place.
- Preparations were being made around vaccines. It was hoped the final trials would be successful and it was envisaged deliveries would be around the beginning of next year with a staggered roll out.

The Chair thanked Dr Brown for the information he had provided and asked that he pass on the committee's thanks to the Public Health Team.

The following comments and questions were raised:

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- Why there was no testing centre in Cramlington. Dr Brown explained that a lot of work had been carried out regarding into the viability of sites with access to car parks that would not interfere with the local economy. The four testing sites were at Ashington, Blyth, Berwick and Hexham. There would not be any new mobile sites but units would be moved across the county. The comments would be fed back to the Task and Finish Group.
- The shortage and suspension of flu vaccines. Pharmacies were getting supplies and priority of the vaccines went to care homes and staff. This would be brought to the attention to the Flu Collaborative Team
- Was the County Council carrying out any communications regarding the spike in the 50 – 59 age range and cross transmission? There was a lot of comms taking place with radio ads, etc and also the Behaviours Change add campaign.
- The mandatory use of Vitamin D. Dr Brown explained that mandating would be difficult but there was a growing body of evidence link to vitamin d and the result of clinical trials were awaited.
- How accurate were the flow tests ? That would depend on the user. Whilst Asymptomatic testing was not carried out, there were reports that suggested a similar level of sensitivity and were more likely to have a false negative. No test was 100% but this would add to enabling support to a resident or care home some reassurance, but would not be a replacement for PPE
- The safety of the vaccines. Dr Brown advised that the vaccines had gone through clinical trials to ensure that volunteers who had done the trial had not come to harm. There would be some people that would have some side effects as in every trial and the benefits would outweigh the risks of the harm from Covid.
- The recent statement regarding Christmas lockdown rules. Dr Brown stated that if the rates did not come down sufficiently before 2 December, it would be more than likely that the Northumberland would move back into Tier 3 or higher. It was understood that families and loved ones wanted to see relatives over the Christmas period, but a message would need to be send out to do this in a safe possible way

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

## **86. WINTER SERVICES UPDATE**

The report provided an overall update of the pre-season preparation ahead of the forthcoming winter services season. (Report attached as Appendix A)

Mr Carle advised that the service was winter ready.

42,000 tons of salt had been delivered across 11 depots. A strategic salt store at Powburn of 6000 tons. A new salt barn at Otterburn was being constructed.

been completed. Supervisors and drivers were in position on a three shift rota and fleet were in place to look after the gritting fleet. All vehicles were on station with 28 gritters and 9 back up vehicles. Four of those were state of the art 70 plate gritters in Ashington, Morpeth and Allendale. An excellent age profile of the current fleet, with up to 10 new gritters in line to be in service for winter 2021. Sub-contract was in place to assist with snow cleaning when necessary.

The grit bins had been refreshed and refilled and material in fit for purpose. Colleagues in Neighbourhood Services were ready to support on treating footpath gritting.

A revised process had been put in place due to Covid to ensure staff were protected by providing additional PPE, wipes and fogging machines in vehicles. All staff had been encouraged to have flu jabs and Manager and Supervisors have been asked to work remotely from home. The winter services new IT system had a special route management and automated route spreading, which would enhance and improve technology. The enhanced vehicle tracking would ensure all routes were done the same way and would improve efficiency.

In response to a query regarding telephone enquiries made to contact centres. Mr Carle stated that the Lagan front office dealt with written enquiries and telephone calls would be diverted to Fire Control and control. It was difficult to provide a response as the logistics were not straight forward.

**RESOLVED** – that the information be noted.

## **87. LOCAL SERVICES WORK PROGRAMME**

Members received the latest version of agreed items for future Local Area Council meetings (attached to the signed minutes as Appendix C).

**RESOLVED** – that the Work Programme be noted

## **88. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the next meeting would be held on Wednesday 16 December.

The meeting closed at 3:50 pm

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

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

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