

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

CRAMLINGTON, BEDLINGTON AND SEATON VALLEY LOCAL AREA COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **Cramlington, Bedlington and Seaton Valley Local Area Council** held on in the Meeting Space, Block 1, Floor 2 on Wednesday, 22 September 2021 at 4.00 pm.

PRESENT

Councillor M Swinburn (Chair in the Chair)

MEMBERS

L Bowman
C Dunbar
D Ferguson
B Flux (part)

S Lee
M Robinson
P Scott (part)
R Wilczek

OFFICERS

H Bowers
M Carle
T Gribbin

D Laux

Democratic Services Officer
Highway Services Area Manager
Neighbourhood Services Area
Manager
Head of Local Services

17. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Daley, Ezhilchelvan and Taylor.

Councillors Flux and Scott informed the Chair that they would need to leave the meeting early.

18. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Local Area Council held on Wednesday, 21 July 2021, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

19. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The following questions had been received from Adam Hogg:-

Ch.'s Initials.....

1. With regard to the Local Transport Plan Programme, NCC had paid for the micro resurfacing of Choppington Road in Bedlington to the sum of £80,000. Why was it that this had not been paid by Miller Homes, who are currently building a large estate north of the Chesters, and as part of their works, they are disrupting the road surface to provide services into the new estate and a new entrance.

Further to the point of the resurfacing of Choppington Road, he asked why the micro resurfacing seemed to be in poor condition to drive on and felt very uneven, which had been carried out by a private company and the A192 from Morpeth to Hepscott Park which had been done in house by NCC, seemed to be fine and done to a good standard.

Mr Carle responded that he would raise the first part of the questions with the Planning and Infrastructure Team as the Area Office Team delivered works on the ground using a procured subcontractor.

With reference to the second part of the question – micro asphalt was an excellent cost-effective way of resurfacing a road that was not predominantly of sound construction. The process sealed the surface and improved the surface texture against the ingress of water. When initially laid, it had a red hue and was quite open textured. Once the surface had been driven on over a period of 3 – 6 months, the surface tightened, and the desired surface finished was achieved. As with any product used, a guarantee of the product would be put in place and any defects would be addressed in the maintenance period by the sub-contractor.

2. NCC were undertaking meetings at County Hall without public attending and during the day time due to Covid risks, however when the Government message seems to be “lets get everything back to normal”, will NCC be recommencing meetings which includes the LAC more public in both venues and time or is NCC taking careful approach unlike the Government of waiting and seeing what happens with Covid ?

The Chair responded that the Authority had been guided by the Corporate Health and Safety Manager on direct involvement at meetings. There had been some recent discussion about having the LACs in public venues but since the pandemic there had been an issue with, access, parking and IT availability.

It was the intention as soon as possible, to have meetings in the various areas, but this needed to be done in a safe way

20. PETITIONS

This item was to:

- a) Receive any new petitions:

A petition had been received from the Seghill Clean Team regarding fly-tipping in Seghill. A report would be prepared for the November meeting.

- b) Consider reports on petitions previously received: None to consider.

Ch.'s Initials.....

- c) To consider updates on petitions previously considered: There were none to consider.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

21. POLICING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY UPDATE

Inspector John Caisley was in attendance to give an overview and answer questions about policing and community safety matters in the Cramlington and Bedlington command areas which he was responsible for. The main problems in the area included:

- Levels of crime had returned pre-Covid, as the levels through lockdown had lowered through restrictions.
- Complaints about youth disorder and speeding vehicles on primary routes.
- Demand on the police was extremely high, especially at weekends.
- A process was in place to risk assess various issues, there had been issues with the 101 system.
- Measures were in place to improve the system to manage levels of calls.
- Issues that concerned members of the public

In response to members questions, the following information was provided:-

- Speeding at the A192 at Hartford – this was now a designated site for the speed van, which would be sited at peak times and different times and would continue into the future.
- Bedlington area – had the same level of crime levels.
- Dashcam footage and the quality of CCTV – CCTV was valuable to protect the town's assets and provided the police with evidence of crimes. Dash cam was also useful as it helped with the actual scene of an accident.
- Speed of traffic in Seaton Sluice – the Neighbourhood Team had their own speed measuring devices which were deployed. Feedback had not been given to residents in the past, but they would be informed of outcomes in the future.
- Fire and Support units also provided support when not deployed.
- Damaged cars in Elsdon Avenue and Tillmouth Avenue, Hollywell – if these were not on the list for the speed camera, they would be fed in.
- The comment regarding the approach into Seghill from Seaton Delaval and the speed limits were taken on board. The data requested regarding ASB would be chased up with colleagues.
- Difficulties with reporting incidents via the 101-phone line. The reporting of incidents was quicker done online. It would be helpful to get the message out that reporting online was quicker. The Police and Crime Commissioner was aware of issues with the methods of contacting the police.

RESOLVED – that the information be noted.

22. LOCAL SERVICES ISSUES

Members received the following updates and explanation of the impact of Covid-19 on front line services from Tony Gribbin, Neighbourhood Services Area Manager:

Grounds Maintenance

- Staff in all sections had continued to deliver high profile services despite the continued challenges of COVID and revised working practices had been necessary.
- Covid continued to be challenging and processes and procedures continued to be reviewed to deliver services as before lockdown.
- Assisted bulky waste collections was currently being reviewed with a view to reinstating the service.

Bereavement services (SE)

- Cremation service numbers per day had declined to near normal numbers.
- Burial service numbers hadn't fluctuated too much from previous years.

Grass Cutting

- Grass cutting remained on target to achieve the required number of cuts in all areas but was weather dependent.
- There had been some challenging periods this year due to near perfect growing conditions, with a spell of very warm then wet conditions. Teams had recovered well and standards on target.
- Teams were currently on cut 10 in Bedlington, cut 15 in Seaton Valley and cut 11 in Cramlington.

Street Sweeping

- Usual areas were being worked on but leaf hotspots would be started in a couple of months.
- Any issues should be brought to the team's attention.

Winter Works

- Winter works schedules were being collated and a number of walkabouts had been taken to help this process.
- Routine annual maintenance commitments would continue but early requests from members were welcomed on areas members considered required attention over the winter.

Weed Trial

- The glyphosate alternative weed trial was coming to an end shortly, it was planned to apply one more treatment of the alternatives and record the results. A report on the results of the trial would be produced around November and shared with members.

Ch.'s Initials.....

- It had been particularly challenging this season and the second treatments across areas had commenced.

Waste Services

- Other than a few minor vehicle breakdowns, staffing shortages and covid restrictions, Residual, Recycling and Garden waste collection services were all operating well.
- The collection rounds and resources in the south east were being reviewed due to the current housing developments. 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.
- Bottle recycling facilities continued to be well used and additional collections were being targeted in those areas showing high usage.
- Demand for bulky waste collections remained high, extra slots had been created.
- Domestic waste tonnages remained higher than pre-lockdown, operational adjustments had been made to cope with the demand, but the situation remained a significant challenge for the service.

Members asked a number of questions including:

- Was there a facility for removing leaves from grassed areas in front of houses, particularly social housing ?
- Could the bottle banks at Seaton Sluice car park be re-sited elsewhere to relieve pressure as the car park was one of the smallest and busiest in the village ?
- Missed edging in 4 estates in Cramlington, when would they be scheduled to be cut again?
- Thanks were conveyed to officers for cutting hedges in Netherton and footpaths in Hazelmere, Bedlington. There was further overhanging hedges and it was queried whether this was school's responsibility, who was responsible for the upkeep of land at the back of Lanchester Green and the roundabout at Broadoaks; spraying of weeds; the excavation of family graves and distress to families.
- Was the area of verge next to the Keel Row, part of the pilot area?

Mr Gribbin responded as follows:

- There was no mechanical means for the removal of leaves, but if leaves had fallen whilst grass cutting was being undertaken, the leaves would be macerated at the same time.
- The locations for bottle banks were quite difficult, but the request would be taken back to the depot in that area.
- Edging was carried out every 3 –4 years, this would be investigated and reported back.
- Staff were prioritised to undertake weed spraying, work had been started, but was not yet complete due to staff not being available through Covid and sickness.
- If a grave was being dug at the end of a row, excavated soil would be put on grassed areas, if the grave was in the middle, matting would be put down with a

Ch.'s Initials.....

barrier and the area cleaned. The logistics of excavating and moving soil depended on whether it was a double or triple grave and the team was respectful and realised how upsetting this could be to families.

- The verge next to the Keel Row had wild flowers and was not sure whether it was part of the pilot area or left to grow naturally. Mr Gribbin would report back on this.

Mick Carle, Highway Services Area Manager gave a brief update on the following:

All Highways Inspectors and maintenance crews continued to work tirelessly inspecting, fixing potholes, making repairs and making safe category one defects across the south east.

The gully emptier was fully deployed dealing with reported issues and cyclic maintenance.

Larger tarmac patching had been carried out in the following locations:

- Dorchester Court, New Hartley
- Mill Lane, Seghill (Junction of A189)
- Front Street, Cramlington
- Grenville Court, Cramlington

Planned works had been identified and programmed for footway and cycleway patching to be carried out September/October and would continue to maintain carriageway patching following that.

Drainage improvements:

- Burnside, Bedlington
- Nether Riggs, Bedlington
- Manor Walks cycleway, Cramlington
- A192 Earsdon to Holywell

Highway Inspectors had identified problem areas and those would be programmed/completed in the coming weeks pending meetings with traffic management.

Winter maintenance:

- Preparation was being carried out for the 21/22 winter season
- Rock salt was being delivered across the county after a large delivery into the Port of Blyth. Working hard with ICL to ensure there was a consistent level of deliveries to reach 36,000 tonnes for the start of the season on 1 November 2021.
- The installation and route verifying for the roll out of Exactrak Automated Gritting was being finalised, this would give a consistent approach to treatment of the gritting network, increased resilience in drivers and routes and the ability to seamlessly move resources where required to any issues. It would also give a high level of activity reporting which would defend any litigation.
- Delivery of 9 new state of the art Mercedes Econ gritters in the next few months as part of ongoing fleet replacement programme.

Ch.'s Initials.....

Members asked a number of questions including:

- Cycle and footpaths in Northburn and complaints about markings
- 30 mph on Choppington Road has not happened; the road between Broadoaks roundabout and Netherton, people exiting estate have a problem, was there any update on the school crossing at Netherton Lane and also lack of direction signage to St Bede's School
- A surety issue with a Bellway regarding a pelican crossing at the back of Manor Walks which required sign off by Bernicia.

Mr Carle responded as follows:

- A number of complaints had been received about the marking on cycle paths, this was being looked into, there were some areas which required to be refreshed and delineated.
- The issue regarding lack of signage had been passed to colleagues and this would be chased up personally and the Head Teacher St Bede's would be contacted. The other 3 issues would be passed on to the relevant departments.
- The developer who was responsible for that area would be contacted.

(Councillors B Flux and P Scott left the meeting at 4.57 pm).

RESOLVED that the information be noted and issues set out in the bullet points above be followed up.

23. LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN UPDATE

David Laux, Head of Technical Services introduced the report which covered the Local Transport Plan (LTP) programme agreed in March and the preparations for the 22/23 programme.

A draft programme of £19.015m was consulted on with Local Area Councils in February 2021. At that stage there was uncertainty regarding the capital allocations From DfT for 2021/22 and therefore a prudent view had been taken regarding the likely funding available based on the previous year's base allocations. Details of the programmes were outlined in the appendices of the report.

The County Council had also made an additional investment of £15 m for highways maintenance. An initial programme for £10m of this funding was approved on 9 April 2020 and the second phase of the programme for £5m was approved on 17 March 2021.

The report provided updates on progress across the whole county.

Locally, there were 38 integrated transport schemes, 11 of which had been completed including some highways safety schemes at the Three Horse Shoes and Stead Lane, Bedlington; interactive queue signs on the A189 on the approach to the Moor Farm roundabout; 6 schemes had works orders issued including the new Pegasus crossing for horses and cyclists at the Avenue, Seaton Delaval, a 20 mph safety scheme at Doxford Place, works at Bedlington bank and Meadowdale Academy and another 14 schemes in progress including improvements in Bedlington.

Ch.'s Initials.....

On the maintenance side, there were 25 schemes, 12 of those were complete including the Klondyke Bridge scheme and schemes at Fisher Lane, Stead Lane and a number of micro surfacing schemes. There were a further 11 schemes in design including the Spine Road resurfacing and Bedlington Bank safety scheme.

The programme was progressing well but there had been a number of challenges with delivery with a possible slippage into the next financial year.

Officers were working on a project to provide better information in future to members on the progress on individual schemes going forward.

Preparations had commenced for the development of the 2022/23 capital programme. In July, letters had been sent out to all County Councilors and Parish and Town Councils asking them to identify priorities issues for their Ward or Parish so that they could be considered in the prioritisation process for 2022/23. Responses were to be submitted by 8 October. Once responses were received, they would be logged and assessed by Council priorities. These would be discussed as part of the annual Members LTP workshop and then considered alongside other information with discussion with the Portfolio Holder. The agreed draft programme would then be shared with Local Area Councils in February 2022 for approval for the 2022/23 financial year.

Members raised the following:

- Officers were thanked for the work that had been carried out in A192 Holywell/Earsdon
- The road was collapsing in various places in Holywell, would that be part of the next LTP.
- Omission of a section of microsurfacing in North Ridge.
- What did the road safety scheme at Bedlington bank involve?
- Maintenance of footpaths in Cramlington after being dug up for broadband. Did highways have an input of inspections or was it street works?
- Was the work on Klondyke bridge now complete?
- An update on discussions with Highways England in respect of Moor Farm
- The 20 mph outside of schools

Mr Laux responded as follows:

- The condition of the road in Holywell would be taken back to officers. Any roads classed as a defect would have an adhoc inspection by Highways officers.
- He did not have the full detail of the road safety scheme and would get the details and report back.
- Streetworks Inspectors were very clear on the national requirements to make sure reinstatement was in line with national specification but the Council could not make utility companies do more than this.
- The work on Klondyke bridge was now complete.
- He had not been directly involved in discussion with Highways England and either Rick O' Farrell and Rob Murfin would be able to provide the information.
- The 20 mph schemes process were hoped to be streamlined and to use more resources to try and push forward with the Design Team.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

Ch.'s Initials.....

24. LEASEHOLD REFORM

A briefing had been circulated to members on the Leasehold Reform (Ground Rent) Bill which was currently progressing through Parliament.

Paul Reynolds from Renown Estate Agents was in attendance to provide an overview and explanation of leasehold issues and problems.

Leasehold was a North East problem, especially in the Cramlington area. In the 1970's properties were sold as leasehold rather than freehold. The intention originally was to keep everything in uniform. As leases had shortened, properties were virtually unsaleable. Campaigns had been running on Facebook in Cramlington with a good deal of success.

Roadshows had been carried out by Leasehold Solutions previously but due to Covid and other problems this had discontinued but it was hoped that these could start running again with the support of the Council.

Mr Reynolds pointed out the pitfalls of purchasing a leasehold property and shared ownership, and stated that the Bill needed to be progressed through Parliament as quickly as possible.

If members were interested in researching leasehold ownership there was an organisation on Facebook called National Leasehold Campaign and also Shared Ownership on Twitter.

A member queried what would be the best way forward if Government failed to change the policy. Mr Reynold responded that people needed to be educated when purchasing a property and openness and accountability with the solicitor acting for the developer.

The Chair thanked Mr Reynolds for his detailed explanation and if any members wished further information to contact Mr Reynolds.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

25. LOCAL AREA COUNCIL WORK PROGRAMME

The work programme was attached and the Chair asked that should anyone have any items they would like to raise they should contact him. The item regarding the Police and Crime Commissioner had been deferred to January.

RESOLVED that the Work Programme be noted.

26. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would be held on Wednesday 20 October 2021. (Planning only).

Ch.'s Initials.....

27. URGENT BUSINESS

A member referred to the work in Bedlington Town Centre which had stopped. The Chair stated that the Cabinet Member had been asked to put a report forward and a presentation brought to a future LAC and hopefully presented in the Bedlington area.

CHAIR.....

DATE.....

Ch.'s Initials.....