

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES AND PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the **Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee**
on Wednesday, 27 October 2021 at 10.00 a.m.

PRESENT

Councillor N. Oliver
(Chair, in the Chair)

COUNCILLORS

Cartie, E.	Mather, M.
Gallacher, B.	Richardson, M.
Hardy, C.	
Morphet, N.	

CAB

Horncastle, C.W.	Community Services
Riddle, J.R.	Local Services

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

P. Jones	Service Director – Local Services
S. Nicholson	Scrutiny Co-ordinator
P. Soderquest	Head of Housing and Public Protection
N. Turnbull	Democratic Services Officer

25. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Castle and Robinson.

26. FORWARD PLAN OF CABINET DECISIONS

The Committee considered the Forward Plan of key decisions (August to November 2021). (Schedule enclosed with the signed minutes).

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

27. SCRUTINY OF CABINET REPORTS

The Committee were advised that the following reports would be considered by the Cabinet on 9 November 2021. Members were requested to comment on the proposals in the reports.

27.1 Northumberland Waste Management Strategy – Outcome of Kerbside Glass Recycling Collection Trial

The report presented the key outcomes of the kerbside glass recycling pilot scheme in operation since November 2020 and recommended the next steps for the scheme. (A copy of the report is enclosed with the signed minutes.)

Paul Jones, Service Director – Local Services, commented that the kerbside glass recycling trial had achieved an average annual yield of 72kg per household compared to an anticipated 41 kg per household. He explained that it had been anticipated that the scheme would have an impact on glass collection at bring sites. However, the Covid-19 pandemic and closure of hospitality venues earlier in the year had resulted in a 22% increase in glass collection at HWRC's and bring sites, which meant the impact of the trial on diversion rates from these facilities could not be determined.

It was therefore proposed to extend the trial until 31 March 2023 in order to provide a more accurate baseline and improve confidence in the data. There was also capacity to increase the number of households participating in the trial from 1000 to 1200 at each of the four locations. This would improve the value and productivity of the pilot.

Confirmation of new burdens funding for local authorities was expected by the end of 2022 with enhanced kerbside recycling collection services required in an Environmental Bill to come into effect in 2023/24. Collection of good quality glass material with low contamination meant that the material being collected could be used for remelt. This was environmentally beneficial, offering a positive carbon impact which outweighed the transportation activity.

Councillor Riddle, Portfolio Holder for Local Services, expressed his support for the initiative which had been well received by residents using the service. Unfortunately, it was not possible to roll the scheme out county wide until funding was made available by the Government.

The following information was provided in answer to questions from members:

- Benchmarking information had been obtained from the Waste and Recycling Action Programme (WRAP).
- Modelling work in 2019 considered the changes required to meet obligations to collect a broader range of dry recycling at the kerbside including glass and also potentially food waste. A separate trial for the collection of food waste was also being actively considered.
- The Council had made a significant investment in wheeled bins, refuse collection vehicles and the sorting plant which were working extremely well in Northumberland resulting in high quality recycled material.
- The 800 additional homes were located next to the existing pilot areas in order to maximise return and reduce travelling time between the routes and the disposal site.
- The Government had been consistent in its messaging in that new burdens funding would be provided to local authorities to enable increased kerbside

recycling services. To expand the service now would place a significant additional financial burden on taxpayers with an estimated £1.25 million in annual revenue costs and £4.2 million capital costs for vehicles and containers for the glass collection which would rise for a separate food waste collection and a broader range of dry recyclable material. The Government's strategy extended producer responsibility obligations and taxation on manufacturers and retailers of packaging materials.

- Discussions were being held with planning officers regarding provision of recycling areas in new developments. Some locations and residential properties did not have space for wheeled bins and therefore alternative solutions needed to be considered such as communal glass bins or localised bring sites. It was expected that the number of bring sites would be reduced. Sack based collections were accepted as an acceptable method of refuse collection where there was no alternative. A further trial was planned in the Hirst area to improve the containerisation of waste.
- Deposit return schemes were also being considered for beverage cans and bottles at high density locations via reverse vending machines. The merits of these were more controversial due to bureaucracy, increased costs and duplication of resource and effort.
- The extra collections were being undertaken by staff in receipt of overtime.
- The extended trial period would allow the collection of robust data which would enable the Council to lobby Government for the funds required to provide the service.

Members made the following comments:

- The officers and staff were thanked for the update and working overtime to enable the pilot scheme to run.
- Wheeled bins for glass collection were preferred from a manual handling and safety aspect as it meant that heavy boxes did not need to be lifted to chest height. It was accepted that they were convenient for some residents whilst inconvenient for those with storage issues.
- Residents could choose how often the bins were presented to be emptied. The material could be washed, did not give an unpleasant odour and therefore smaller households may not need them emptied as frequently.
- Reference was made to reduce, reuse, recycle principle and the preferred order of priority.

RESOLVED that, subject to the comments above, the Cabinet be advised that the Committee positively supported the recommendations in the report.

27.2 Report on a Policy for Street Naming and Numbering

The report set out the proposed policy for the identification and allocation of appropriate names for streets in the County. (A copy of the report is enclosed with the signed minutes).

Philip Soderquest, Head of Housing and Public Protection, explained that a review had been undertaken of the policy which was currently in place with a small number of updates as the policy had worked well. The Council only

intervened on a small number of occasions when there was disagreement between developers and parish and town councils or other consultees.

The policy set out the criteria for developers to follow and how a proposed street name was assessed to determine whether it was acceptable. Clear naming and numbering was required to ensure the effective delivery of mail, location of addresses for emergency services and identification of properties for the efficient collection of Council Tax and NNDR.

The policy made provision to allow deviation where this was required, in a very small number of cases, and required agreement by the Head of Housing and Public Protection in consultation with the portfolio holder and other partners, as appropriate.

Councillor Horncastle, Portfolio Holder for Community Services supported the updated policy which was set out the process clearly to ensure street naming and numbering was logical.

The following information was provided in response to questions from Members:

- Discussions would be held with officers to ensure that consultation was held with relevant parties to ensure proposals were appropriate as there could be disagreement if suggestions were not archeologically relevant or accurate. It was noted that branding and names were often finalised by developers prior to discussions with the local authority or construction on site. These should be held at the earliest opportunity.
- Officers would check whether street naming and numbering could be incorporated within planning conditions to ensure a timely decision for the delivery of materials and equipment on site.
- Existing street names were only changed in exceptional circumstances. The reason for a change would be considered. Consultation would include town or parish councils and may include residents. Concerns regarding an anticipated application would be discussed after the meeting.

The updated policy was supported by members who commented that:

- It was appropriate that the final decision was made by the local authority.
- The identification of a lead officer was welcomed.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet be advised that the Committee supported the recommendations in the report subject to a review of the consultation process with Town and Parish Councils.

28. REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATOR

Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee Monitoring Report

The Committee reviewed its work programme for the 2021/22 council year. (Report enclosed with the signed minutes).

It was agreed that due to the scheduled LTP workshops in November which would include an induction on the LTP process and highways maintenance, it was proposed that a review of any unresolved highways issues be deferred to a later scrutiny meeting. An update on Neighbourhood Services would be considered at the next meeting on 1 December 2021

It was noted that the following reports could also be deferred:

- Active Travel and Road Safety
- Customer Complaints Update

Members were asked to contact the Scrutiny Co-ordinator with suggestions for the work programme for future meetings.

RESOLVED that the work programme be noted.

29. URGENT BUSINESS

The Chair reported that this would be his last meeting as Chair as he was to be replaced by Councillor Reid at the next meeting of County Council on 3 November 2021.

Councillor Mather, Vice-Chair, on behalf of the committee, thanked Councillor Oliver for the work he had undertaken as Chair. He commented on the importance of the role of scrutiny for the Council.

Several other members expressed their gratitude and disappointment that Councillor Oliver would not be continuing as Chair.

CHAIR _____

DATE _____