

Environment Sub Committee

Tuesday, 9 July 2019

Present: Councillor B Burdis (Chair)
Councillors L Bell, G Madden, J Mole, L Bartoli,
J Cruddas, J Harrison, K Osborne, E Parker-Leonard and
S Phillips

Apologies: Councillor A Austin

E1/19 Appointment of Substitute Members

There were no substitute members reported.

E2/19 Declaration of Interests and Dispensations

There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.

E3/19 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 26 February 2019 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

E4/19 Biodiversity Action Plan Report Update 2018/19

Consideration was given to a report and presentation which outlined the progress made over the past year in relation to the Newcastle and North Tyneside Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP).

It was explained that over the course of the year a number of wildflower meadows had been created and maintained at various locations across the Borough. Fruit trees, hedge plants and bulbs had been planted in a number of locations across North Tyneside.

In addition to the work associated with the BAP it was explained that a significant amount of work was undertaken in relation to applications for development to maintain or improve the biodiversity of the area. An example given was the Nexus development on the former Howdon landfill site to create a marshalling yard. The site had been identified as a habitat for the Dingy Skipper Butterfly and officers had worked with the developer to ensure the creation of butterfly banks and additional habitat planting to provide a suitable replacement habitat for the Dingy Skipper Butterfly whilst allowing the development to go ahead.

Reference was also made to the works in relation to the Killingworth Flood Scheme where additional floating islands had been installed along with some additional marginal planting.

Members sought clarification on what could be done in relation to the targets which had not been delivered in the BAP. Reference was made to the production of best practice guidelines for rail side land management to minimise disturbance to wildlife which had not

been completed. It was explained that the land was outside the control of the Authority. Members suggested that it might be possible for the Authority's representatives to raise this with those responsible for the maintenance of the rail banks.

Reference was also made to the target to assess the status of invasive, non-native species in ponds and lakes and to implement a strategy for their eradication. Clarification was sought on whether the Authority was keeping on top of the issue. It was explained that, for example, the Authority had developed a GIS Map of Japanese Knotweed in the Borough. Treatment of Japanese Knotweed was carried out on an annual basis on the Authority's land but the Authority could not treat the problem on other peoples land.

Members also questioned the targets in relation to water voles. It was explained that there had only been one recent sighting of a water vole in North Tyneside. Reference was made to having a suitable environment in place for water voles and it was explained that work would need to be undertaken to address the problem of isolation of small pockets of water vole friendly environments rather than just creating suitable environments at a number of discrete locations across the Borough.

Reference was made to the lack of suitable resources to undertake specific environmental surveys. It was suggested that it might be possible to contact the Universities to see if some PHD students might be able to carry out surveys as part of their studies. It was also suggested that members of the public might also be interested in taking part in particular environmental surveys, for example in the parks.

Reference was also made to the practice of developers covering hedgerows with netting to deter birds nesting in the hedgerow prior to commencement of development. Members sought clarification on the steps that the Authority could take to ensure that developers maintained or protected hedgerows on their development site. It was explained that planning conditions covered what a developer could and could not do in relation to the protection of hedgerows.

Clarification was also provided on the steps taken to create a new biodiversity area such as a roadside wildflower meadow.

The Chair thanked the officer for her presentation and report.

It was **agreed** that the report be noted.

E5/19 Work Programme

The Sub-committee received a report which presented Members with potential topics for inclusion in the 2019/20 work programme. As part of the process for establishing the 2019/20 Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme, suggestions had been sought for potential topics that the Sub-committee could look at. As in previous years, the focus of overview and scrutiny would be on policy development.

Following discussions with the Chair and Deputy Chair of Environment Sub-committee, the Cabinet Member for Environment and senior officers, the following topics had been identified as possible areas for the Sub-committee to consider over the coming year:

- The Authority's waste strategy including waste collection, recycling and

- flytipping;
- Environmental enforcement;
 - Air Quality Strategy;
 - Water quality along the coast;
 - Climate change emergency.

Members were given the opportunity to raise other topics relevant to the remit of the Sub-committee for inclusion in the work programme. The following suggestions were put forward:

- The Authority's carbon footprint and the steps in place to reduce it;
- The work to reduce the reliance on single use plastics within the Authority;
- Flytipping

The report highlighted that the Sub-committee was able to establish a sub-group to carry out an in-depth investigation into a particular area but that due to resource constraints only one sub-group could operate at any one time.

It was **agreed** that the following be added to the Sub-committee's work programme for the 2019/20 municipal year:

1. Carbon Footprint
2. Flytipping
3. Single use plastics.