

Environment Sub Committee

Tuesday, 10 September 2019

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

Apologies: Councillors A Austin and G Madden

E6/19 Appointment of Substitute Members

There were no substitute members reported.

E7/19 Declaration of Interests and Dispensations

There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.

E8/19 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2019 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

E9/19 Scope of the Sub Committee

Consideration was given to a presentation which set out in detail the services provided by the Authority to enhance and protect the environment of the borough. It was explained that these services fell within a number of distinct areas including:

- Horticulture and Parks;
- Street Cleansing and Enforcement;
- Waste Management;
- Fleet and Winter Road Maintenance;
- Bereavement Services; and
- Biodiversity.

It was explained that the horticulture service was responsible for cutting over 13 million square metres of grass every cycle as well as maintaining almost 100 roundabouts, over 70 biodiversity areas and 140,000 trees across the borough. On an annual basis the team arranged for the planting of around 325,000 plants and bulbs and maintained over 140 miles of Waggonway and Public Rights of Way.

The parks department was responsible for the maintenance of 26 parks in the borough. Over the course of the past year there had been over 1.3 million individual visits as well as almost 11,000 educational visits to North Tyneside Parks. A number of parks had received 6 Green Flag Awards.

It was explained that the street cleansing service was responsible for the mechanical

sweeping of 647 kilometres of roads in the borough and the maintenance of 2500 litter and dog waste bins. In addition the service was responsible for the removal of graffiti, the collection and disposal of discarded needles and sharps along with the collection and disposal of dead animals found in the streets. The teams had also carried out 66 estate clean-ups every year.

The waste management team had responsibility for the collection of waste and recycling via the green/grey/brown bin scheme. It was explained that the team carried out around 6.5 million bin collections each year along with 8,500 bulky waste collections. In 2018/19 there had been 94,136 tonnes of waste collected which was 9,000 tonnes down on the previous year. 36.27% of the waste had been recycled, 52.93% had been sent to the energy from waste plant at Haverton Hill on Teesside and 10.80% had been sent to landfill.

The fleet team were responsible for the provision of vehicles for the authority and its partners. It was responsible for servicing and repairing over 450 vehicles as well as testing over 2100 hackney carriage and private hire vehicles each year. In addition the team also dealt with an average of 280 reported abandoned vehicles each year. It was also explained that 80% of the fleet had been updated over the past 5 years with 10 zero emission electric vans recently added to fleet.

The winter maintenance team was responsible for a fleet of 12 winter maintenance vehicles which operated from October until the end of April each year. The team covered 240 miles of priority network roads each treatment and had 5,000 tonnes of salt in stock.

The multi-cultural bereavement service had responsibility for the operation of 2 crematoria, 7 cemeteries and 6 closed church yards. The team carried out approximately 2000 cremations and around 500 burials each year and it had retained the Gold Charter for the Bereaved, which it had held for the past 7 years.

Reference was made to the work of the biodiversity officer in providing ecological advice in respect of planning applications and securing S106 contributions for biodiversity projects/schemes from developers. The officer also provided advice to the planning policy team and worked in partnership with a number of friends groups to deliver biodiversity projects.

In addition to the above it was explained that Technical and Regulatory Services had an overview of a number of environmentally related functions including sustainability, resilience and emergency planning, the Tyne Port Health Authority and the Authority's Transport and Waste Strategies. It also had an overview of the services delivered by Capita on behalf of the Authority including network management, highway maintenance, surface water management, environmental health and licensing.

It was also explained that the proposed Contaminated Land Strategy had been agreed by the Cabinet and was now out for public consultation. Consideration was also being given to the clean air strategy and how this could impact on taxi services and lead to a review of the Authority's taxi policy.

A 10 year waste strategy was currently being developed for the borough and the waste collection and recycling contracts were being reviewed.

Reference was also made to the works being undertaken to address flytipping in the borough and it was acknowledged that further work was needed to increase recycling rates

within the borough.

Members sought clarification on whether the distance taxis travelled to and from their home to school transport runs was a factor taken into account when awarding contracts. It was explained that the Authority had to follow procurement processes and legislation in awarding contracts.

Members referred to the ongoing works to develop a strategy to address the Authority's declaration of a climate emergency and sought assurances that the draft strategy/action plan would be brought to the Environment Sub-committee so that members' comments could be incorporated into the strategy/action plan report presented to Cabinet.

Clarification was sought on the systems in place to ensure that the Authority's vehicles did not make unnecessary journeys. It was explained that the Authority's vehicles were fitted with tracking systems and the Authority had computer software which enabled it to minimise the number of journeys needed.

Reference was also made to a perceived increase in flytipping. It was noted that there were a number of hotspot areas but the Authority was working to address the problem. It was explained that there were a number of prosecutions for flytipping offences pending. It was also explained that it was a national problem and the Environment Agency were currently carrying out a piece of work to address the problem.

The Chair thanked the officers for their presentation.

It was **agreed** that (1) the presentation be noted; and
(2) a report be presented to a future meeting on the strategy and action plan being developed to address the climate emergency

(At this point Councillor Burdis left the meeting. Councillor Bell occupied the chair for the remainder of the meeting.)

E10/19 Single Use Plastics

The Sub-committee received a presentation which provided an update on the work undertaken by the Authority to reduce the amount of plastics used in the delivery of its services. The Sub-committee had previously been presented with the North Tyneside Council Action Plan which had been developed to address the problem of single use plastics in the borough. It was explained that the Authority had started to make inroads in to the medium term elements of the action plan. A number of videos which demonstrated the progress which had been made were shown at the meeting. Reference was also made to the work being undertaken with the North East Procurement Organisation to influence tenderers for the Authority's contracts to consider removing single use plastics from their tenders.

It was explained that the Authority was influenced by emerging government policy on the topic. Central Government had issued a number of updates and consultations including "Our Waste, Our Resources: A Strategy for England" in December 2018. Details of three consultation documents were outlined along with the number of consultation responses received:

- Consultation on introducing a deposit return scheme in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA));
- Tackling the plastic problem: Using the tax system or charges to address single use plastic waste (HM Treasury);
- Consultation on proposals to ban the distribution and/or sale of plastic straws, plastic stemmed cotton buds and plastic drink stirrers in England (DEFRA)

Reference was also made to the development of an action plan following the decision of the Council to declare a climate emergency in July 2019. A climate change board, made up of elected members and officers, had been convened to progress the Authority's response.

The chair thanked the officers for their presentation

It was **agreed** that the presentation be received and a further update be provided to a future meeting.