

Environment Sub Committee

Tuesday, 8 March 2022

Present: Councillor B Burdis (Chair)
Councillors G Bell, L Bell, M Green, M Hall, J Harrison,
C Johnston, J Kirwin, G Madden, P McIntyre, J Mole and
J Shaw

E17/21 Substitute Members

There were no Substitute Members reported.

E18/21 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2022 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

E19/21 Declaration of Interests and Dispensations

There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.

E20/21 Cabinet Member responsible for Environment

Councillor Sandra Graham, Cabinet Member for the Environment provided an update on the various elements of her portfolio including Environmental Services, Waste, Climate Change, Highways and Cycling.

It was explained that Environmental Services was responsible for the delivery and maintenance of parks, open spaces, amenity grass and spring and summer bedding displays. The service was also responsible for the maintenance and cleanliness of streets and estates in the borough.

The community protection team dealt with anti-social behaviour, littering, flytipping and dog fouling and had recently been brought back into the Environment Directorate as it was considered that this was a better fit due to the nature of the work in ensuring that the local environment was a nicer place for residents.

The fleet and winter maintenance service managed and maintained over 400 authority vehicles and provided winter maintenance services on over 240 miles of priority routes across the borough.

The horticulture and parks service managed the parks and open spaces of the borough and carried out regular maintenance including grass cutting, floral planting and maintenance of trees within the borough. It was explained that the department had dealt with over 750 reports of fallen and damaged trees following Storm Arwen. Reference was also made to the work undertaken with other authorities in relation to the roll out of the Great North

Forest.

The Authority had a 10-year plan for waste which was central to its plans to be carbon neutral. Plans were being made for the collection of food waste and to improve the levels of recycling. Reference was made to the impact that Covid had had on recycling generally including an increase in the amount of waste generated due to more people being at home. It had been noted that the markets for recycled materials had been extremely volatile recently. It was also suggested that the booking system at the household waste recycling centre had been well received by residents. Plans were also in place for a “shop” to be set up at the recycling centre to allow residents to be able to re-use goods which would otherwise end up in landfill.

In relation to climate change the Authority’s Our North Tyneside Council Plan 2021-25 set out the ambition for North Tyneside to be carbon net-zero by 2030. A climate emergency board had been set up, with 10 workstreams. Details of which were outlined along with some of the existing actions already taken, including for example the provision of £450K for electric bin wagons.

The presentation also included the various strategies in relation to highways and encouragement to increase cycling for recreation and commuting. Details of the various cycling initiatives were outlined, including the active travel scheme in relation to the seafront.

Members sought clarification on how residents and small businesses could become involved in the work of the Climate Board. It was suggested that the involvement of the community and businesses would evolve over time but the initial plan had been to gain momentum and quick wins through the involvement of the larger businesses at the beginning.

Members referred to advantages of recycling but it was acknowledged that this came at a cost to the Authority. It was suggested that the cost of recycling would be reduced if more materials were reused rather than being recycled. It was explained that the cost associated with recycling did not only relate to a financial cost but also to an environmental cost. Reference was made to the high carbon cost of the disposal of textiles and it was suggested that there was a need to look at the issue of recycling in carbon terms rather than tonnage of material and the monetary cost of recycling or disposal.

Reference was made to the plans to collect food waste from homes and businesses and whether it was possible for this to be expedited. It was explained that guidance and funding was awaited from the government to enable the roll out the collection of food waste. In the meantime the Authority encouraged residents to reduce the amount of food that was wasted.

Members queried the possibility of installing sunken waste bins in certain areas of the borough, such as at the coast. It was explained that such a scheme was not viable at the current time but that the technical constraints were being addressed and this would continue to be monitored.

Members commented that the wildflower planting at the side of roads had been variable, with some areas being impressive whereas others less so. Clarification was sought on whether teams continued to seed the wildflower areas. It was suggested that this would be taken up with the relevant teams.

Members suggested that much of the environmental work carried out was government funded and that community involvement in environmental projects should be encouraged. It was explained that the Authority supported many local groups to improve their local environment and would welcome more community groups requesting assistance for projects in their area. Reference was made to the work of a number of “friends of” groups which was supported by the Authority.

Reference was made to the major housing developments in the borough such as Murton Gap and the need to try to get in first with appropriate landscaping and biodiversity schemes before the development was put in place. It was suggested that the installation of such elements as woodlands, ponds and grass meadows at the beginning of the process would improve and preserve the biodiversity of the area rather than just putting in less biodiverse grassed areas. It was suggested that a representative the Planning Department be invited to a future meeting to set out how this could be achieved.

The Chair thanked Councillor Graham for her report.

It was **agreed** that (1) the report and presentation be noted;
(2) a representative of the planning service be invited to a future meeting in relation to improving biodiversity in the borough through the planning process