

Environment Sub-Committee

10 September 2014

Present: Councillor L Bell (Chair)
Councillors J Cassidy, E Hodson, W Lott, G Madden and
D Ord.

E7/09/14 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors G Bell, B Burdis, C Johnson and P McIntyre.

E8/09/14 Substitute Members

There were no substitutes reported

E9/09/14 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.

E10/09/14 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2014 be confirmed.

E11/09/14 North Tyneside Surface Water and Drainage Partnership – Progress Update

Consideration was given to a report which provided an update of the activities of the North Tyneside Surface Water and Drainage Partnership at its meeting held on 23 July 2014. These activities included:

- The receipt of a presentation from Northumbria Police on an overview of their work and responsibilities. The presentation also provided details of the various structures in place for responding to emergency incidents based on severity;
- Noting the progress of the North Tyneside Flood Risk Management Strategy which had been formally adopted by Cabinet on 14 July 2014;
- Noting the progress of the flood risk implementation plan which highlighted the major and minor projects which had been completed and those which were ongoing;
- Received an overview of flood operations since April 2014. The Highways operations team had between 1 April and 23 July 2014 undertaken 3 flood response operations following weather warnings.
- Received a report which provided an update from the Flooding Community Preparedness Sub Group. It was noted that the Community Flood Wardens were now operational.

Consideration was also given to an update on the gully cleansing programme. Capita provided a gully cleansing service for the borough maintaining approximately 40,000 gullies on a two year cycle with one dedicated gully cleaning vehicle. A strategic review of the gully cleaning programme was being undertaken to identify the most appropriate frequency for cleansing each of the gullies in the borough. It was explained that gullies in known flooding hotspots were cleansed on a more frequent basis and also when adverse weather was forecast.

It was proposed that, as the current vehicle was getting towards the end of its useful life, two new vehicles would be acquired to improve gully cleansing in the borough. A bid would be made to obtain capital funding from the funding available for flood mitigation. The cost of the new vehicles would be approximately £0.253M and the running costs would be met from efficiencies

Members sought clarification on how members of the public could find out information about the gully cleaning programme in their area. It was noted that this information was not currently available in a format that could be presented to the public but that officers were looking at the introduction of an IT package which would make this information available via the Council's website.

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

E12/09/14 Cycling Strategy and Public Rights of Way

Consideration was given to a report and presentation which set out the current position in relation to cycling in the borough and highlighted a number of issues in relation to Public Rights of Way (PRoW) over the coming years.

It was explained that the growth in cycling in North Tyneside over the past decade had been the highest in Tyne and Wear with a significant amount of the growth in cycling taking place during the week, which indicated that much of the increase in cycling was due to people commuting. The existing Cycling Strategy 2010 – 14, which was developed with an aim to make North Tyneside the North East's cycling borough by 2030, was due to be refreshed.

The key objectives of the strategy were to:

- Provide a seamless, on and off road strategic network for cycling in North Tyneside;
- Promote cycling to residents and visitors as a healthy, sustainable travel option;
- Provide links to the national Cycling network and other neighbouring networks;
- Put in place the infrastructure to support large scale cycling e.g. cycle parking;
- Offer on-road cycle training for residents
- Promote equality, accessibility and independent mobility for all.

It was explained that, due to financial pressures, investment in the cycling network had reduced and was now mainly restricted to maintaining the existing network. This limited maintenance has generated a number of complaints including those relating to overgrown vegetation leading to a deterioration of the surface. Other complaints related to the lack of signage of the cycle routes and the need for suitable cycle parking/storage facilities.

Reference was also made to the responsibility of the authority to maintain the Definitive Map and Statement of public rights of way. It was explained that the highways authority had a statutory duty to “assert and protect the rights of the public to the use and enjoyment of any highway including a duty to prevent, as far as possible, the stopping up or obstruction of all highways”. It was explained that there were many routes for which a public right of way had been established but which had not been recorded on the Definitive Map. Such routes needed to be added to the Definitive Map by 1 January 2026 otherwise the rights would be lost. It was explained that the process of investigation and negotiation with landowners on adding routes to the Definitive Map could be complicated and time consuming.

In North Tyneside there were 4 separate Definitive Maps, based on the former urban district council areas. It was proposed to amalgamate all four Definitive Maps.

Details of the works undertaken to ensure that rights of way were not obstructed or damaged by developers and public utilities were outlined.

It was suggested that two task and finish sub groups be set up, the first to examine the existing cycling strategy and to make recommendations to be included in the new cycling strategy. The second task and finish sub group would look at the implications of the 2026 cut off date to record paths on the Definitive Map and examine whether the maintenance of the public rights of way network was at an appropriate level and whether there were means of securing third part funding towards the maintenance the network.

It was **agreed** that (1) a sub group be set up to make recommendations for the Cycling Strategy 2015;

(2) a sub group be set up to examine and make recommendations in relation to the recording and maintenance of the public rights of way network;