

Environment Sub-Committee

12 November 2014

Present: Councillor B Burdis (Chair)
Councillors G Bell, J Cassidy, W Lott, P McIntyre and D Ord.

E18/11/14 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors L Bell, E Hodson, G Madden and M Reynolds.

E19/11/14 Substitute Members

There were no substitutes reported

E20/11/14 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.

E21/11/14 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2014 be confirmed.

E22/11/14 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 15 October 2014. These activities included:

- Noting the formal adoption of the North Tyneside Flood Risk Management Strategy;
- Noting the progress of the flood risk implementation plan which highlighted the projects which had been completed and those which were ongoing;
- Received a report which provided an update from the Flooding Community Preparedness Sub Group. It was noted that the first cohort of Community Flood Wardens were now active in their roles.

Consideration was also given to an update on the flood risk implementation plan. A number of major projects costing in excess of £100K were detailed including works at Astley Drive to sleeve new pipe work inside an existing culvert to prevent its collapse and to improve the flow of the watercourse. In Shiremoor works to the culverts beneath the Waggonway and New York Road had been completed and the new culvert replacement and installation at Clara Avenue was ongoing. Construction of the new attenuation pond between Shiremoor and Wellfield was expected to begin in Spring 2015.

Works to provide property level protection to 4 houses in Murton Village had been completed. These works had been funded by the Environment Agency and included the construction of physical barriers to prevent water entering properties and the installation of specialist drain covers to prevent water entering the property through the drains.

Details of the drainage improvements at Murton Village were outlined including improved highway drainage and increased storage capacity of the existing ditch.

The sub-committee was also advised of a number of minor works which had been completed at Cockburn Terrace. These works included the installation of a new channel drain to capture surface water, the installation of a new road hump to channel surface water to the gullies and the replacement of the existing gullies with increased capacity units.

At Woodburn Drive an innovative gabion basket filter drain with a connection to a nearby culvert had been installed and an earth mound had been created to retain surface water within the bridleway and channel it towards the filter drain.

A number of schemes which were being carried out in partnership by the Authority, Capita and Northumbrian Water were outlined including sewer improvements and the installation of additional highway drainage at Highbury, Brundon Avenue and Whitley Road/John Street.

Members sought clarification over a number of issues including the acquisition of the land for the attenuation pond at Shiremoor, the involvement of the Metro operator in relation to works to relieve the flooding associated with the Metro line and works associated with climate change in areas such as Chicken Road, Wallsend.

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

E23/11/14 The Management of Trees in North Tyneside

Consideration was given to a presentation which set out the current policy in relation to the management of trees in North Tyneside. It was explained that the current policy had been created in 2009 and provided a framework for tree management practices and a point of reference to ensure a consistent approach to tree matters was in place. The policy also took account of the Biodiversity Action Plan and a number of sustainable development policies. The tree management policy had been reviewed in 2010 when consideration of quality of life issues had been introduced.

There were approximately 140,000 trees in North Tyneside's tree stock of which approximately 40,000 were street trees, the others were sited in parks, cemeteries, churchyards and school grounds.

It was explained that in the past year members had raised over 200 queries and there had been almost 1,500 enquiries through the contact centres and other sources in relation to requests to prune or remove trees. Many of the complaints in relation to trees related to seasonal issues such as leaf fall or the attraction of birds and insects. The authority had two dedicated tree teams and an arboricultural officer who carried out works to trees in the borough. During 2013/14 the tree teams had removed 121 trees but during the same period 608 new trees had been planted.

The main considerations in relation to tree works related to public safety, the legislation in relation to the management of trees and arboricultural good practice. All tree works carried out by the teams was carried out in accordance with the current British Standard. Pruning was generally only carried out where there was a threat to public safety, where the tree was a legally actionable nuisance, it was causing an obstruction to a public highway or was causing damage to property. Pruning works were also carried out to deter rope swings, again on the grounds of public safety.

The policy on the removal of trees was outlined and it was explained that this generally related to trees which were dead, dying or considered dangerous or causing an obstruction to the public highway. Trees could also be removed to facilitate development or if they were causing structural damage to property.

A new survey of the trees in the borough had been commenced, the last survey having been carried out around 9 years ago. A computer database was also being developed to improve the information on trees held by the authority.

Members questioned the policy in relation to removal of the tops of trees to reduce the height of the tree and queried whether this was down to cost. It was explained that in many cases the removal of the top of the tree would not solve the issue but could make matters worse as it would encourage further growth.

Reference was also made to the development of community woodlands to encourage young people to take an interest in the environment. It was explained that this had been done in 1986 as part of a woodland planting scheme making use of grant funding.

It was explained that the tree policy was currently being refreshed and it was suggested that the sub-committee should examine the refreshed policy before it is formally adopted.

It was **agreed** that the refreshed tree management policy be presented to a future meeting of the sub-committee.

E24/11/14 Development of a Waste Collection Strategy Post 2017

Consideration was given to a report which set out the Council's current in-house waste collection service. It was explained that household waste was collected on a weekly basis and recyclables on a fortnightly basis. Green waste was collected on a fortnightly basis during the growing season, with no collections between December and March.

The Council had entered into a contract for the treatment and disposal of residual household waste with SITA who also managed the borough's household waste recycling centre. The contract would run out in 2022. A further contract for the processing of recyclable material with G O'Brien and Sons expires in 2020. The Council also has a contract with Palm Recycling to provide communal bring site facilities.

The EU Waste Framework Directive provided the legislative framework for the collection, transport, recovery and disposal of waste. The Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2011 and the Waste (England and Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 also provided duties which waste collection authorities were required to meet.

Article 10 of the directive required local authorities to set up separate collections for paper, metal, glass and plastic by 2015 as a minimum. This expanded the requirements of the Household Waste Recycling Act 2003 to collect at least two types of recyclable waste separate from household waste.

The sub-committee was advised that Council had worked with Rotare and Newcastle University to identify efficiencies across the collection service. In November 2010, North Tyneside Council had participated in a regional project which aimed to optimise the efficiency of collection routes through the use of a standard software tool. The tool, RouteSmart, was used across the North East to shape collection routes and make efficiency savings through reduced vehicle and fuel usage.

The Council had implemented a new four-day working week, operating Tuesday to Friday, in April 2011 which had led to:

- Improved the reliability of the service and allowed crews who had completed their route to support colleagues with collections still outstanding;
- No disruption to collections in those weeks affected by a Bank Holiday;
- Improved the utilisation of vehicles and staff;
- Collection vehicles having vehicle trackers fitted which enabled supervisors to monitor collections and ensure the workloads were balanced. The trackers had the added benefit that residents could be provided with real time information on collections or detailed information if there has been a problem; and
- Supported the integrated collection of trade waste with domestic household waste.

This work had resulted in efficiency savings of around £250,000 per annum due to the reduction of the number of collection rounds and making better use of the vehicles. This had resulted in improved customer satisfaction levels, rising from 70% in 2008 to 90% in 2011.

It was explained that changes had been made to staffing roles including the giving of advice to residents on recycling and other waste issues and enforcing regulations, when necessary. The collectors also acted as the eyes and ears of the authority to identify vulnerable residents.

The report also outlined the current costs of providing the collection service. It was explained that the current net costs of waste collection were:

Refuse collection	£2,000,723
Recycling collection	£1,137,326
Total	£3,138,049

The Weekly Collection Support Scheme (WCSS), a grant from the Department for Communities and Local Government provided funding of £3.36m to support the retention of weekly refuse collections for 5 years to 2017. It was explained that the revenue expenditure had been split over 2012/13 to 2016/17 at £547,000 per annum and £397,000 had been removed from the base budget.

The funding had provided the following benefits:

- Harmonised waste collections through the standardisation of wheeled bins across the borough;
- The provision of on-street recycling points in each of the wards;
- A doubling of the on-street recycling capacity from 20,000 litres to over 54,000 litres;
- The purchase of two additional split bodied recycling collection vehicles capable of collecting from kerbside, communal or on-street bins;
- The integration of recycling rounds to include communal bins and on street bins; and
- The standardisation of litter bins.

The remaining capital would be used to purchase a small recycling collection vehicle to enable twin stream collections across the Borough.

It was explained that when the grant support ran out in 2017, there would be a shortfall in the collection budget and no budget provision to support an education or behaviour change programme. The current grant has been used for a comprehensive waste awareness and recycling incentives campaign which aimed to reduce the waste produced per household by 1%, increase recycling in areas of low participation by 5% and increase plastic bottle recycling by 2% a year. A recent survey, as part of the waste awareness campaign, has shown that after 6 months activity residents' awareness of the Wash, Squash and Recycle and Love food Hate Waste messages has doubled.

It was explained that the authority's ambition was to increase the recycling rate from 37.6% in 2012/13 to 45% by 2017. An actual increase in the amount of dry recyclables collected and diverted from the residual bin, would by 2017, provide treatment savings of around £500,000 per annum. Other authorities had reached a 45% recycling rate but this had been achieved as a result of major investment or a change in the collection service, such as alternate weekly collections and food waste collections.

The sub-committee then went on to consider a number of options for alternative collection services.

The first option would be to move to alternate weekly collections. This would reduce the cost of operating the refuse and recycling service to £2,998,049, a saving of approximately £368,000. It was explained that this type of collection had been introduced in more than half of the local authorities in the country and had resulted in increased recycling rates. In this option, operated in Durham, Gateshead, Newcastle, Northumberland and South Tyneside, recyclables were collected one week and waste the next week. This option would reduce the need for 3 refuse collection vehicles and crews but require an additional recycling vehicle.

It was explained that alternative weekly collections had been demonstrated to lead to a reduction in the amount of rubbish collected and an increase in the amount of recycling. If it were to be introduced in North Tyneside there would be a need to ensure that there was appropriate information provided to residents on the benefits of the changes and this could take around 2 years to be successful. Reference was also made to the possibility of introducing a pilot scheme in a particular area. It was also explained that there was no evidence that the introduction of alternative weekly collections had led to a significant increase in fly tipping or any health risk, especially

when the rubbish is in wheeled bins. Experience from neighbouring authorities was that if the benefits had been clearly explained there was little public objection.

It was explained that to ensure maximum savings were achieved any changes would need to be aligned with the fleet replacement programme so the savings from vehicles could be achieved from a reduction in the fleet.

The second option considered, namely a three weekly refuse collection and two weekly recycling service would cost £2,915,614 and provide savings of around £485,435. It was explained that this option would result in a reduction of 4 refuse collection vehicles and associated teams and an increase in one recycling vehicle and the retention of a team. It would also mean that 2000 tonnes of waste would be diverted to recycling and savings made in collection and disposal costs and also provide environmental benefits due to lower vehicle emissions.

The disadvantages of this option included opposition from residents due to a perceived reduction in service and the potential for an increase in fly tipping. The Department of Communities and Local Government would also oppose such a move.

The third option considered, moving to a monthly refuse collection and fortnightly recyclable collection, had the potential to generate even greater savings, around £640,189. It would result in the need for a reduction of 6 refuse collection vehicles and teams but there would be a need for an extra recycling vehicle and team. The scheme would provide the same types of benefits as the second option, outlined above, and the same issues including opposition from the public and the potential for increased fly tipping.

Reference was made to concerns from families that changes to the waste collection timetable would result in overfilled bins, which would be unpleasant in the summer months. Members questioned whether additional collections could be arranged during particularly hot weather and, for example, at Christmas and other festivals. Reference was also made to the possibility of looking at providing smaller waste bins to encourage residents to recycle more. It was explained that some authorities used 140 litre bins rather than the 240 litre wheeled bins generally used in North Tyneside.

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

Chair:

7 January 2015