

Environment Sub-Committee

6 July 2016

Present: Councillor B Burdis (Chair)
Councillors G Bell, L Bell, P Brooks, D Drummond, E
Hodson, M Huscroft, F Lott, W Lott, G Madden, M Rankin
and M Thirlaway.

E9/07/16 Apologies

There were no apologies for absence submitted.

E10/07/16 Substitute Members

There were no substitutes reported.

E11/07/16 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

Councillor Rankin advised the meeting in respect of item 6 on the agenda, Report of the Waste Collections Post 2017 Sub-group, that he had a professional relationship with one of the contractors named in the report and would therefore abstain on any vote.

E12/07/16 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 8 June 2016 be confirmed.

E13/07/16 Biodiversity Action Plan Update 2015

Consideration was given to a report which outlined the progress made in achieving the targets set out in the habitat and species action plan for 2015 as part of the Newcastle and North Tyneside Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP).

It was explained that a significant amount of work had been undertaken during 2015 to maintain and improve the biodiversity of the borough. 23,000 square metres of wildflower meadow had been created across the area to create additional habitat for bees and other insects. The authority had also been working with Friends of the Earth on a project to raise awareness of bumble bees. A number of wildflower packs had been given to primary schools in the borough to encourage planting and creation of new habitats for bumble bees. In addition surveys had been carried out in Northumberland Park and at Marden Quarry, where meadow areas had been created to attract bees. It was also explained that a couple of bee hives had been installed in Killingworth and the honey collected was sold in the cafe at Killingworth.

Under the coastal and estuary section of the BAP the Sub-committee was advised that a small area of sand dune habitat had been created at The Haven in Tynemouth and a grazing project at St Mary's Island wetlands had been developed to maintain and enhance the coastal habitat. It was also explained that floating rafts had been installed on the Wallsend Dene watercourse to increase saltmarsh habitat.

238 trees had been planted across 36 sites in the borough and woodland management had been carried out at Killingworth Lake, Wallsend and Northumberland Parks and at the Fish Quay in North Shields to improve local biodiversity. As part of the Parks Regeneration schemes a number of projects had been undertaken to improve the biodiversity of the areas including restoration works to ponds and watercourses and tree, bulb and wildflower planting schemes.

A significant amount of work had also been undertaken, as part of the planning process, to identify areas where improvements to biodiversity could be required of developers. Examples given included:

- the provision of a living green wall at the Silverlink Retail Park;
- the provision of a number of species rich grassland areas in developments at Backworth, Scaffold Hill, Darsley Park and Whitehouse Farm;
- the provision of bat and bird nesting boxes at a number of sites across the borough;
- the provision of a wildlife underpass for otters and badgers as part of the Whitehouse Farm development;
- the provision of new wetlands at Scaffold Hill, Whitehouse Farm and Station Road

It was explained that residents had been involved in many projects over the past year. The authority's biodiversity officer and parks staff had done a lot of work with various community groups, including the Friends of Briardene. Reference was made to the roll out of the wildflower meadows scheme and it was suggested that the communication with residents and the publicity for the scheme could have been clearer. It was suggested that in future residents be advised that the meadow areas might appear to be unkempt for a little while whilst the flowers were growing and this was a normal part of the process.

Reference was made to the living wall on the Next building at the Silverlink Retail Park and on the Marks and Spencer's building in Newcastle. It was suggested that the incorporation of such a wall on the car park at Northumberland Park Metro Station would be of benefit to wildlife in the area and would assist in softening the appearance of the building. It was suggested that the Cabinet Member be requested to raise this issue with the owner of the building.

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

E14/07/16 Report of the Waste Collections Post 2017 Sub Group

Consideration was given to the report of the Waste Collections Post 2017 Sub-group which had been established to examine the options available to the authority for the collection of household waste and recycling when the Weekly Collection Support Scheme ended.

The Sub-group had met on 6 occasions and looked at the various options available to the authority for the collection of household waste. It had also looked at how the authority could improve the levels of recycling in the borough.

The Sub-group had identified 6 recommendations which if implemented would result in an increase in recycling levels, a reduction in the generation of waste and would allow the views of residents to be taken account of in relation to the future collection of household waste in the borough.

It was **AGREED** that the report be forwarded to the Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee with a recommendation that it be referred to Cabinet.

E15/07/16 Work Programme

Consideration was given to the inclusion of an additional item to the Sub-committee's work programme for the 2016/17 municipal year. It was suggested that it might be appropriate to look into the steps which could be taken to move to paperless meetings of the authority and to examine the potential savings in the use of paper and printing costs.

It was **AGREED** that paperless meetings be added to the Sub-committee's 2016/17 work programme.