

## **Environment Sub-Committee**

**11 January 2017**

Present: Councillor L Bell (Chair)  
Councillors G Bell, P Brooks, D Drummond, E Hodson,  
M Huscroft, G Madden and M Thirlaway.

Also in attendance:  
Councillor J L L Harrison - Cabinet Member with  
responsibility for Housing and Transport  
Councillor J Stirling - Cabinet Member with responsibility  
for the Environment

### **E28/01/17 Apologies**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors B Burdis, F Lott, W Lott and M Rankin.

### **E29/01/17 Substitute Members**

There were no substitute members reported.

### **E30/01/17 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations**

There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.

### **E31/01/17 Minutes**

**Resolved** that the minutes of the meeting held on 5 October 2016 be confirmed.

### **E32/01/17 Climate Change and Public Health**

Consideration was given to a report and presentation which outlined the potential health implications for North Tyneside associated with climate change. The Committee on Climate Change, a statutory independent body which advised central government on the risks and opportunities resulting from climate change, had recently published a report entitled "UK Climate Change Risk Assessment 2017". The report confirmed that the global climate was changing. In the United Kingdom (UK) research had indicated that climate change was associated with an increased frequency of extreme weather events including heat waves, flooding, drought and cold snaps, all of which had potential health impacts.

It was explained that flooding was a complex issue which, in addition to inundation of homes and businesses, had the potential to impact on people's health as a result of;

- direct water related impacts such as drowning

- Gastrointestinal problems
- Psychological issues such as anxiety

The Authority had developed relationships with partner organisations, including Northumbrian Water and the Environment Agency, to deal with flooding issues in the borough. Over the past five years there had been a number of flooding incidents in North Tyneside, including:

- surface water flooding on 28 June, 23 - 25 September and 26 November 2012;
- a tidal surge on 5 - 6 December 2013; and
- extreme high tides on 11 - 13 August 2014.

It was explained that tree planting could be used to mitigate the effects of flooding. Reference was made to the creation of community woodland on the site of the former Fenwick Pit. Five different types of trees were being planted as part of a trial to identify which were the most suitable for that location. Work was also ongoing to identify additional sources of funding to carry out the scheme. In addition a number of schemes were ongoing to address flooding concerns around Monkseaton, Wellfield, Murton and Shiremoor.

One of the consequences of changes to the climate was the potential for an increase in heatwaves during the summer months. In North Tyneside extreme high temperatures were uncommon unlike the south of England where they occurred much more frequently. Public Health England had developed a National Heatwave Plan which set out the actions required to be taken to support people who may be vulnerable to the higher temperatures including the elderly, infants, those with chronic or severe illnesses or conditions and the homeless.

Public Health England had also produced an annual cold weather plan. It was explained that the impact of cold weather was predictable and generally preventable. Cold weather increased the incidence of heart attacks, strokes, respiratory disease, influenza, hypothermia, falls and associated injuries. Cold weather alerts are enacted fairly regularly in North Tyneside, based on MET Office alerts, although generally cold weather periods did not last very long.

It was explained that droughts were complex being a mixture of low rainfall and hot dry conditions which increased demand for water resources. All regional water companies were required to prepare and maintain a drought plan; Northumbria Water's Drought Plan had been published in 2013. The vulnerable groups which would be affected by episodes of drought were the same as those potentially affected by heatwaves.

The UK as a whole had 10% more water than was needed to supply homes and businesses, although there were some areas which currently had slight deficits which were currently being addressed by the relevant water companies. It was explained that the availability of water was predicted to change as a result of temperature changes and an increase in the population. Increases in demand were likely to be accompanied by a decrease in water availability as a result of climate change.

It was explained that the Authority had a number of plans in place to deal with extreme weather events in North Tyneside including:

- Cold Weather Plan 2016;

- Operational Flood Plan 2016; and
- Heatwave Plan 2015

Air quality was measured in order to monitor the effects of pollution on health. The main pollutants of concern were Nitrogen Dioxide and Particulate Matter, which were generally created as a result of emissions from road traffic and which also contributed to global warming. The Government had set national objective air quality levels for particulates and nitrogen dioxide. It was explained that pollutants were measured in real time at two locations, Wallsend and East Howden, and monitoring for nitrogen dioxide was carried out on a monthly basis at 26 locations throughout the borough. An air quality status report was required to be submitted to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) on an annual basis. Local authorities had a duty to assess air quality in their area against national air quality objectives and standards including a new duty to tackle particulates in the air, particularly the very fine particulates of less than 2.5 µm in diameter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>). The Sub-committee was advised that air quality in North Tyneside was generally good.

According to data from Public Health England there had been an estimated 101 excess deaths in the borough which were attributable to PM<sub>2.5</sub> air pollution.

Members sought clarification on whether information on the number of avoidable deaths due to air pollution had been broken down on a ward by ward basis. It was explained that the data was only recorded on a borough wide basis.

In the UK there were more than 25 common species of mosquito although none of the species were capable of transmitting Malaria or Dengue Fever. Although changes to the climate may increase the abundance of mosquitoes in the UK it may also increase the number of their predators. Reference was also made to an increase in the number of ticks which thrived during milder winters.

It was explained that the Authority and its partners, including the NHS and Environment Agency, had well established systems in place to respond to severe weather related incidents and outbreaks of communicable diseases.

Reference was also made to the planning process which provided an opportunity for measures to be adopted in relation to sustainable development, control of road traffic and the use of renewable energy sources to improve air quality.

Reference was also made to the need to examine alternative energy sources to address climate change concerns. Suggested alternatives included Geo-Thermal, Heat Pumps, tidal, solar, wood burning and nuclear energy. Councillor Stirling explained that the Authority was continually looking at ways of reducing its use of energy and identifying alternative energy sources which could be used in the borough. He explained that unfortunately much of the new technology was still in its infancy. He also explained that changes to the government's feed in tariffs for solar energy had reduced its attractiveness. The Authority had also taken steps to mitigate its use of energy by, for example, installing the Mayflower control panels on street lighting.

It was suggested that a Sub-group be set up to look into the various energy options available to the authority and its residents.

Reference was made to the number of excess deaths in the borough and it was suggested that the Adult Social Care, Health and Wellbeing Sub Committee may wish to examine the available data at future meetings.

The Chair thanked the officers for their report.

It was **AGREED** that (1) the report be noted; and (2) that a Sub-group be set up to look into the various energy options available for use by the Authority.

### **E33/01/17 North Tyneside Transport Strategy**

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Transport, Councillor John Harrison, had accepted an invitation to appear before the Sub-committee to present an outline of the Authority's approach to the development of a North Tyneside Transport Strategy. Councillor Harrison was accompanied by Colin MacDonald, Senior Manager Technical & Regulatory Services, and Andy Flynn, Integrated Transport Manager.

The objectives of the exercise were to:-

- a) deepen members' understanding of local and regional transport policy developments; and
- b) provide the Sub-committee with an opportunity to influence the development of those policies, either immediately through questions and comments to the Cabinet Member or alternatively by identifying topics for further investigation.

Councillor Harrison welcomed the opportunity to share the strategy with the Sub-committee as part of a three stage consultation process also involving the state of the area event and the Economic Prosperity Sub-Committee. The Authority had never had a Transport Strategy before which was intended to link together the key themes from national, regional and local transport strategies.

Colin McDonald gave a presentation to outline the context within which the plan was being compiled. In doing so he made reference to the many Authority and regional strategies and plans that were in place in relation to different aspects of transport. The high-level North Tyneside Transport Strategy would set the framework for transport in the borough and how the Authority wanted transport to link to North Tyneside's overall corporate aims. The vision of the draft strategy was that "North Tyneside will have a safe, easy to use, healthy, affordable, accessible and integrated travel and transport infrastructure that works for residents, businesses and visitors effectively and efficiently."

The following 5 strategic themes or challenges had been identified:

- a) to increase economic growth, effective movement for people, businesses and goods; support regional aim of "more and better jobs";
- b) to manage demand on transport networks and address current and future transport challenges;
- c) to improve safety, health and well-being outcomes and sustainability in relation to people, communities and the environment;
- d) to improve connectivity with all parts of the Borough, the region, the rest of the country and the world; and
- e) to enable smart choices for all for people and businesses, about how to get to where they need to.

The Sub-committee was also presented with a first draft of the strategy document which provided further commentary on each of the strategic themes and set out key policy objectives in relation to each.

Reference was made to health and wellbeing outcomes within the strategy. The most recent version of the Local Transport Plan (LTP3) highlighted the fact that 50% of all journeys of 5 miles or less were undertaken by car. In order to achieve many of the outcomes set out in the strategy there would need to be a shift in the modes of transport used by the public. This would require a culture change so that walking and cycling became an easier option.

The Sub-committee sought clarification as to the aims of the strategy. Reference was made to the need to ensure that the Authority's various strategies, plans and policies contributed to its aims as set out in the Council Plan. It was explained that a delivery plan would be attached to the strategy so that it was possible to monitor the success of the strategy. This delivery plan was currently being developed. It was suggested that it would be helpful if the delivery plan could be circulated to members.

Reference was made to the availability of funding to deliver transport schemes and the changes made in obtaining funding for schemes. It was noted that the Authority had been successful in bidding for funding for a number of transport schemes in the Borough over recent years.

The Sub-committee referred to the current issues around air pollution and diesel vehicles, particularly in towns and cities, and wondered how the strategy addressed concerns about emissions from buses. It was explained that the Authority wanted to ensure that vehicles in North Tyneside met the best standards but that this needed to be done in line with current legislation. The strategy would set the direction of travel in relation to improving air quality in the borough

Members commented that there appeared to be a lack of reference to motor cycles in the strategy.

It was explained that the strategy was due to be presented to Cabinet in Spring 2017 for approval and Councillor Harrison invited the Sub-committee to re-examine the development of the strategy ahead of that meeting.

The Chair thanked Councillor Harrison and the officers for their report.

It was **AGREED** that the report be noted and a further report be presented to a future meeting.

### **E34/01/17      Waste Collections Post 2017 – Cabinet Response**

Consideration was given to a report which set out the Cabinet Response to the Waste Collections Post 2017 Sub-group's report on the various options available to the Authority in relation to the collection of household waste and recyclables at the conclusion of the Weekly Collection Support Scheme in 2017.

The Sub-group had made 6 recommendations which had been presented to Cabinet on 12 September 2016. At its meeting held in November 2016 Cabinet had accepted 5 of the 6 recommendations and had agreed to note the remaining recommendation in relation to consulting residents on proposals to move to an alternate weekly collection for household waste and recyclables. Cabinet had confirmed that currently there were no plans to alter the frequency of waste collections in the borough but if in the future the option to change the frequency of collections an appropriate communication plan would be developed so that engagement and consultation would take place before any formal decision is taken.

The Cabinet Member for Environment, Councillor John Stirling, confirmed that residents wanted a weekly collection service to remain and that sufficient budget provision had been made for this to continue for at least the next financial year.

An update was also provided on the recommendations to lobby Ministers, manufacturers and retailers for a reduction in the amount of excess packaging on products. It was explained that this was an issue which affected the whole country and not just the local area. Reference was made to a campaign working to address the issue on a national basis.

It was **AGREED** that the report be noted and that regular updates be provided to future meetings.