

Environment Sub-Committee

5 July 2017

Present: Councillor B Burdis (Chair)
Councillors G Bell, L Bell, K Clark, D Cox, E Hodson,
M Huscroft, W Lott, D McMeekan and M Thirlaway.

Councillor J Stirling (Cabinet Member for the
Environment)

E1/07/17 Apologies

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors K Bolger and D Drummond.

E2/07/17 Substitute Members

In accordance with the Council's Constitution the following substitute member was reported:

Councillor D McMeekan for Councillor D Drummond

E3/07/17 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.

E4/07/17 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 8 March 2017 be confirmed.

E5/07/17 Biodiversity Action Plan – Update 2016/17

Consideration was given to a report and presentation which outlined the progress made in respect of the delivery of the Newcastle and North Tyneside Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) during 2016/17.

It was explained that the BAP, which had been approved by the Cabinet in February 2012, contained a number of habitat and species plans. Details of the targets for each of the habitat and species plans were outlined together with a progress report which provided details of the action taken during 2016/17 to deliver those targets. These included the creation and restoration of 2.3 hectares of wildflower grassland in over 80 sites across the borough, woodland planting at the former Fenwick Pit site and the creation of wetland areas as part of the Murton flood alleviation scheme.

Reference was made to the number of schemes put in place to improve biodiversity as part of the planning process. It was noted that the Authority had been successful

in securing areas of species rich grassland in relation to a number of developments including Indigo Business Park and at housing sites including those at Backworth and at Station Road. In addition areas of wetlands and ponds were being created as part of the Scaffold Hill Housing Scheme and additional woodland planting provided as part of a number of housing schemes including those at Backworth, Darsley Park and Whitehouse Farm.

It was also explained that there were a number of community projects which were carried out in the borough to improve biodiversity and to engage with young people. The Friends of Brierdene had, for example, carried out an annual bioblitz event, undertaken bird, bumblebee and butterfly surveys, held a moth night event with local residents and facilitated a number of school visits for children to plant wild flower plugs. The Friends of Red House Ramble had planted an edible hedge, planted wildflower meadows and created access paths through woodland areas. At Marden Quarry a community big spring clean activity had been held and 10 bee survey and 2 bat event walks had been facilitated.

Reference was also made to works being carried out by the Authority including tree planting on the Fenwick Pit Site. It was explained that this planting had two benefits in that it assisted with drainage on the reclaimed site and also improved the biodiversity of the area.

It was also explained that the Authority monitored the effect of development on biodiversity in the area. Data was collected prior to a development taking place and compared with the situation after the development was completed. The Authority was able to identify and monitor the losses of habitat and compare those with the habitats gained as part of the development process. It was also explained that habitat monitoring was now included in the local plan.

The Chair thanked the officer for her report.

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

E6/07/17 Work Programme 2017/18

The Sub-committee received a report which detailed its proposed work programme for the 2017/18 municipal year. It was informed that the process of establishing the 2017/18 work programme had begun in February 2017 with an email to Cabinet Members, Councillors and Tier 1, 2 and 3 managers seeking suggestions for topics in relation to policy development for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and its sub-committees to examine for the year ahead. An article was also placed on the Authority's web site and communication platforms inviting members of the public to raise issues that they thought would be suitable for scrutiny to investigate. The Scrutiny Chairs and Deputies also discussed the ideas which had been put forward.

Members of the Sub-committee were also invited to put forward suggestions for topics for inclusion in the work programme.

As a consequence of this work two suggestions for in-depth investigation had been put forward, the first from elected members and the second from a member of the public:

- Accessibility – to look at access around streets in the borough and to examine the level of access problems for wheelchair, mobility scooters and buggies by parked cars blocking pathways and to consider how this could be addressed
- Street Cleansing – to review the Authority’s performance in relation to street cleansing, to identify hot spots in the borough and to examine how cleanliness and the programme of cleaning is monitored.

In addition to the above the Sub-committee was reminded that it had a sub-group looking in to energy use and that due to resource implications it had been agreed that each Sub-committee would only have one sub-group in operation at any one time.

At the meeting it was suggested that the Sub-committee should revisit its previous work in relation to the steps taken to address and mitigate the effects of flooding in the borough and to examine whether the measures put in place had delivered the outcomes expected. The Sub-committee had previously received regular quarterly updates on the work of the Surface Water and Drainage Partnership, which had been set up following the flooding incidents in the borough in June 2012, so that members could scrutinise the work of the group and make suggestions to Cabinet if they had any concerns. When Cabinet had decided to consider an annual report on the work of the Surface Water and Drainage Partnership the Sub-committee had stopped receiving updates on the work of the partnership. At the time it was explained that the minutes of the meetings of the Partnership would be published on the Authority’s website so that they could be monitored.

Reference was made to how the flood wardens, who had been recruited following the flooding incidents of June 2012, were updated on local issues and concerns. Reference was also made to concerns over poor drainage at Marden Quarry which may have been as a result of blockages to the outlet.

During discussion on the proposed work programme Members made a number of additional suggestions for the work programme:

- An examination of air quality around the waste treatment site at East Howdon. Reference was made to an ongoing stench from the area;
- Air quality as a result of the use of diesel vehicles

Agreed (1) to approve the following work programme for the 2017/18 municipal year:

- a review of the effectiveness of the measures put in place to alleviate and reduce the impact of flooding in the borough;
- an examination of the air quality around East Howden;
- an examination of the impact of diesel vehicles on air quality in the borough;
- a review of the authority’s performance in relation to street cleansing, and

(2) to monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the recommendations of previous Sub-committee reports.