

COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 21 October 2021

PRESENT – Councillors Tait (Chair), Allen, Cossins, Donoghue, Haszeldine, B Jones, McCollom and Willis

APOLOGIES – Councillors Mrs Culley and Wallis

ABSENT – Councillor Bartch

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Councillors Keir, Curry and Snedker

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Ian Thompson (Assistant Director Community Services), Anthony Hewitt (Assistant Director Highways and Capital Projects), Brian Graham (Head of Environmental Services) and Hannah Fay (Democratic Officer)

CLS17 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

CLS18 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THIS SCRUTINY HELD ON 19 AUGUST 2021

Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 19 August 2021.

Pursuant to Minute CLS11/Aug/21 Members sought updates in respect of the ECML consultation; Northern Link Road; and an update regarding transport options for the night time economy.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 19 August 2021 be approved as a correct record.

CLS19 WASTE MANAGEMENT

The Assistant Director Community Services gave a PowerPoint presentation (previously circulated) updating Members on Waste Management.

It was reported that responsible waste management was everyone's business; reference was made to the Resource and Waste Strategy for England which set out targets for increasing recycling and minimize future waste growth; and the aim was to generate a circular economy in England.

Details were provided of the waste hierarchy; reference was made to the Tees Valley Joint Waste Management Strategy 2020-2035 which aimed to deliver a high quality, accessible and affordable waste management service; and the strategy objectives in relation to waste generation, reuse and recycling and waste recovery and landfill diversion were outlined.

Members were provided with details of the services delivered in Darlington; the trends for

residual household waste, waste treatment costs versus budget and waste streams were outlined; Members noted the impact of the covid-19 pandemic on the percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling or composting, percentage of household waste sent for energy recovery and percentage of municipal waste sent to landfill; and the changes required to improve performance were outlined.

It was reported that the Council was in the procurement process for the Tees Valley Energy Recovery Facility (TVERF); the TVERF was designed to take 450K tonnes and would have 40-year lifespan; would provide a secure, sustainable, reliable and affordable solution for residual waste; would help Darlington and other LAs to work towards achieving zero-waste to landfill; and a carbon capture solution for Teesside and the TVERF was to be developed. In relation to food waste, it was anticipated that separate food waste collections would be introduced weekly from 2024/25; and that an approach to food waste treatments required scoping.

The timeline for waste management changes were outlined; and details were provided of the targets for reuse, recycling and composting rates, energy recovery rate and landfill rate.

Discussion ensued on the affordability of the Teesside carbon capture project, it was hoped that this would be government funded; the recycling of cardboard and other materials that were not currently collected; Members were assured that the capacity of the existing transfer station was more than adequate to manage the waste collected by this Council and the waste would be transported to Teesside by road.

Members were informed of the work being undertaken by Officers to review best practices in other local authority areas to assist with the introduction of food waste collection in 2024/25 and following a question by a Member in attendance at the meeting Members were advised that whilst there was no intention to reduce the frequency of dry waste collection, this may be considered in the future as the quantity and composition of waste changed.

RESOLVED – That the thanks of this Scrutiny Committee be extended to the Assistant Director Community Services for his informative and interesting presentation.

CLS20 DARLINGTON RAIL HERITAGE QUARTER

The Assistant Director Community Services gave a PowerPoint presentation (previously circulated) updating Members on the Darlington Rail Heritage Quarter (DRHQ).

It was reported that the DRHQ was not only a destination tourist attraction but a heritage attraction, urban regeneration scheme, museum, place making and community initiative; the social values of the DRHQ were outlined; and reference was made to the work being undertaken in the town including the RHQ, town centre, Central Park and Darlington Station and Cattle Market.

Details were provided of the timeline for the works to the DRHQ, with work anticipated to start on site in Quarter 1 2022 and a completion date of Quarter 2/3 in 2024.

The presentation provided a number of graphics; Members noted that access to site would be via the Goods Shed; reference was made to the floor plan and a visual of the inside of the

goods shed; details were provided of virtual reality experiences and rides; and Members were informed of the intention for a Darlington/Stockton themed play area. Members were advised that the Lime cells would become the base for Friends of Stockton and Darlington Rail, subject to heritage funding bid.

RESOLVED – That the thanks of this Scrutiny Committee be extended to the Assistant Director Community Services for his informative and interesting presentation.

CLS21 MANAGEMENT OF GRASS VERGES - PROGRESS REPORT

The Group Director of Services submitted a report (previously circulated) updating Members on the progress of the Management of Grass Verges Task and Finish Group which was established to assist the development of a new operational policy in relation to the management of grass verges; and requesting that Members give consideration to the most appropriate way to progress the work required to develop the operational policy.

It was reported that the Task and Finish Group was established following receipt of a report at its meeting on 25 February 2021 which set out the current position adopted by the Council in relation to the management of grass verges; an initial meeting was held on 9 April 2021, where Members agreed to undertake a table top exercise to trial the draft verge damage assessment form; and this planned work did not proceed.

Members were informed that this Scrutiny Committee had agreed to continue with the Task and Finish Group; and the two options available to Members were outlined.

Discussion ensued in respect of the two options; Members were in agreement that this Scrutiny Committee should be involved in the development of the operational policy with support from Officers; and that consideration should be given to the different issues faced in each ward.

RESOLVED – That, in order to progress the work required to develop a new operational policy in relation to the management of grass verges, this Scrutiny Committee proceeds with Option 1 – Member led approach, with Officer involvement.

CLS22 WORK PROGRAMME

The Group Director of Operations submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that consideration be given to this Scrutiny Committee's work programme and to consider any additional areas which Members would like to suggest be included in the previously approved work programme.

Discussion ensued on the current work programme; it was agreed that following the All Members Briefing in respect of the Back Lanes Project, that the item 'Back Lanes' be removed from the work programme.

RESOLVED – That the work programme be updated to reflect discussions.