

Environment Sub-Committee

8 January 2019

Present: Councillor B Burdis (Chair)
Councillors L Bell, K Bolger, T Brady, C Davis, D Drummond, E Hodson and J Mole.

E18/01/19 Apologies

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors W Lott, G Madden and W Samuel.

E19/01/19 Substitute Members

There were no substitute members reported:

E20/01/19 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.

E21/01/19 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 6 November 2018 be confirmed.

E22/01/19 Litter

Consideration was given to a report which explained that at the beginning of each municipal year elected members and officers of the authority along with partner organisations and members of the public were invited to submit suggestions for inclusion in the scrutiny work programme. As a result of this process a number of topics were received for the Environment Sub-committee to consider. One of the suggestions received related to problems of littering in the Whitley Bay area and the steps that the authority could take to educate people, particularly school children, not to drop litter. Reference was made to the amount of litter, primarily sweet wrappers, crisp packets and soft drinks containers, which was deposited in the area around the supermarket on Hillheads Road, Whitley Bay.

The Sub-committee was advised that the authority had a comprehensive litter management programme which included action to remove the litter, enforcement action to deal with littering and education campaigns in the community and schools to prevent litter being dropped in the first place. Details of a number of individual campaigns were outlined including:-

- The autumn campaign which tackled the problem of leaf litter in the borough. It was explained that the authority had removed over 45 tonnes of leaf material last autumn;
- The Big Spring Clean which had involved hundreds of volunteers tidying up specific areas of the borough. As part of this campaign staff from a number of local businesses had carried out several beach cleans in the area;

- Wash Squash and Recycle where over 10,000 residents had signed up to the campaign;
- Love your street – over 20 events had taken place in the last year;
- North Tyneside in Bloom; and
- Operation Hotspot where the authority worked with colleagues in the police and the fire service to target particular areas of concern.

In addition to specific campaigns the authority also worked with nurseries and schools to promote recycling and to educate young people regarding the problems of litter and how it could be avoided. This was delivered through attendance at assemblies, junk modelling sessions and whole school recycling projects, such as at Sir James Knott nursery where a mosaic of the school's logo had been created from used milk bottle tops and pupils from Wellfield First School who had recycled cartons to make bird feeders.

It was explained that the authority also provided information for residents on a range of environmental issues including recycling. They did this through the provision of roadshows, particularly in areas where the level of recycling was poor. Advice was also provided at community events and information on recycling was also provided to all new tenants in their welcome packs.

As well as providing advice for residents and community groups the authority also had a community protection enforcement team who regularly visited local high schools and had also given advice to over 500 residents. The team had been supported by the introduction of a CCTV vehicle and the employment of 4 additional wardens. It was explained that the wardens also worked outside of normal office hours to deal with problems of littering and flytipping. Since September 2018 a number of fixed penalties had been issued in respect of dog fouling and littering. It was also explained that the wardens had also worked with the community in the Howdon area to deal with a specific issue. It was suggested that many community groups would welcome a visit to their area by the community enforcement team to address resident's concerns over littering. Reference was also made to a number of inconsiderate dog walkers who, having bagged their dog waste, left the bags in the street rather than placing them in the bins provided.

Members were advised that there was an on-going issue with litter outside schools and the team had adopted a joint approach with schools to address the problems. It was explained that where pupils were observed dropping litter additional work would be undertaken with the school and where appropriate parents would be informed

In respect of the area of land between the supermarket on Hillheads Road and Monkseaton Metro Station it was explained that:

- The shrubs were recently cut back and a thorough litter pick carried out;
- A number of cleans up have taken place in the past involving ward councillors, Scouts and Park Wardens;
- Local schools have been involved; and
- Environmental Enforcement patrols have been carried out in the area.

In addition arrangements would be made for a review of litter bin provision in the area to be undertaken and consideration given to whether additional signage was required.

Reference was made of the need to ensure that clear messages were communicated to members of the public on what can and cannot be recycled and how they can contribute to making the borough a cleaner place. It was explained that work was on-going to develop a marketing and communication plan linked to the Our North Tyneside Plan 2018 – 2021.

Members questioned what action was taken by the authority to address the problem of littering outside schools in the Monkseaton area, including middle schools. It was explained that where a problem was identified at a particular school the authority would approach the school directly to raise the issue and identify a solution to the problem and where appropriate the community protection enforcement team would be deployed in the area. Reference was also made to the possible use of covert cameras to identify those responsible for the littering. It was explained that the authority relied on overt surveillance in the form of the dedicated CCTV vehicle.

Members also referred to people dropping litter from moving vehicles and questioned what could be done to address this problem. It was explained that work was on-going to identify particular hotspots and where suitable signage could be installed to remind people not to drop litter which could then be backed up by appropriate enforcement action.

Reference was made to cleansing of the boroughs beaches and it was explained that the authority carried out this function using a specialist tractor. The authority also contributed to the cost of the boat which was used to remove rubbish and other debris from the River Tyne. It was explained that the local authority did not have responsibility for removing litter and rubbish from the sea although it was noted that local fishermen would often bring rubbish caught in their nets back to port for disposal.

Clarification was sought in relation to the provision of litter bins on new housing estates and it was explained that suitable litter bins were provided and emptied on a regular basis. Reference was also made to the bin covers which had been installed at the fish quay to prevent access to the bins contents by birds. It was explained that they had been very successful in preventing the rubbish being removed from the bins and it was suggested that they be rolled out along the coast and in town centres, subject to suitable funding being identified.

The sub committee was shown a film which detailed the journey that recyclable material, such as glass and plastic, took from collection at the kerbside through to processing at the depot. The amount of recyclable material collected and the implications of the decision of China to stop importing and processing plastic waste were also outlined. Reference was also made to the Government's resources and waste strategy which had been launched in December. It was also noted that the authority was reviewing its own waste management strategy in light of events.

Reference was made to the public confusion around use by dates and sell by dates on packaged food. It was suggested that these concerns could be covered as part of the love food, hate waste campaign. It was also explained that although there were no current plans for the authority to collect food waste as a separate collection this would of course be kept under review.

The Chair thanked the officers for their presentation.

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