

(These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting of the Environment Sub Committee scheduled to be held on 4 September 2018)

Environment Sub-Committee

3 July 2018

Present: Councillor B Burdis (Chair)
Councillors L Bell, K Bolger, T Brady, C Davis, D Drummond, E Hodson, J Mole, J O'Shea and W Samuel.

E01/07/18 Apologies

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

E02/07/18 Substitute Members

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

Councillor J O'Shea for Councillor W Lott.

E03/07/18 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.

E04/07/18 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 7 March 2018 be confirmed.

E05/07/18 Biodiversity Action Plan Report Update 2017/18

Consideration was given to a presentation and report which provided an update on the works which had been undertaken in respect of the Newcastle and North Tyneside Biodiversity Action Plan.

It was explained that significant areas of species rich grassland, wetlands and woodland planting had been secured through the planning process in respect of developments at Station Road West, Killingworth Drive, East Farm Wideopen and the Backworth housing sites. Reference was also made to the work undertaken by the Authority to provide 1.4 hectares of areas of wildflower grassland on amenity, green space and roadside verge sites. In addition a number of wildflower meadow sites had been provided within the borough's parks.

Reference was also made to the works to maintain and improve ponds within the borough to provide habitats for species such as Great Crested Newts. Hundreds of bat boxes and bird boxes had been funded through the planning process and erected at various sites.

In addition to the works carried out by the authority there was significant activity by various community groups to improve biodiversity in the borough. The Friends of Brierdene, for example, had managed 2 hectares of wildflower meadow and sown 0.8 hectares of wildflower seed. They had also held their annual Bioblitz event and worked with local schools to involve young people in schemes such as planting wildflower plugs. The group also carried out bird, bumblebee and butterfly surveys as well as undertaking watercourse improvements and works to footpaths.

The Friends of Red House Ramble had planted over 500 native trees, fruit trees and hedge plants as well as over 3000 bulbs and 1000 wildflower plugs. They had involved local schools in sowing and planting wildflower seeds and had made use of logs and chippings to create paths and wildlife habitat.

Many other community groups had carried out various works within their localities to improve biodiversity and to raise awareness of biodiversity issues.

Reference was also made to the Urban Buzz Project which aimed to provide a grassland habitat along the river between Wallsend and Tynemouth to attract bees and butterflies.

Members explained that residents had commented on the wildflower planting along the side of roads and on open spaces which they thought had not been as colourful as when first planted. It was explained that wildflower meadows worked best when the soil was poor which required the removal of the cuttings when the area was mown at the end of the season. If the cuttings were not removed the nutrients were absorbed into the ground and this impacted on the growth the following year. It was suggested that to improve the diversity and colour in future years there was a need to sow individual seed mixes on an annual basis.

Clarification was sought on what could be done to improve diversity in relation to allotment sites. Reference was made to some sites being overgrown and unkempt and some private allotments not being maintained and harbouring invasive species such as Japanese Knotweed.

Reference was also made to the provision of wildlife corridors as part of the Murton Gap site. It was explained that there was a masterplan for the site which included the provision of wildlife corridors and that officers worked with developers to maximise wildlife provision.

The Chair thanked the Biodiversity Officer for her presentation and for providing answers to Members' questions.

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

E06/07/18 Work Programme 2018/19

Consideration was given to a report which invited the Sub-committee to give consideration to its work programme for the coming year. The process of establishing the 2018/19 work programme had commenced in March 2018 when a press release had been issued inviting members of the public to submit topics for consideration by the various scrutiny sub-committees.

The Senior Leadership Team had discussed the work programme to identify key policy areas for scrutiny and a list of key plans and strategies had been referred to the chairs and deputy chairs of the scrutiny sub-committees to discuss with the relevant Cabinet Members. All members had also been invited to submit suggestions for topics which the Sub-committee might wish to consider.

As a consequence of this work three suggestions had been received from members of the public:

- To examine the effectiveness of the Authority's fault reporting system;
- To examine measures to curb overhanging branches; and
- To examine whether it may be more effective to concentrate spending on education to reduce the amount of litter

In addition to the above the Sub-committee was reminded that it had a sub-group which was going to carry out an in-depth study into Air Quality in North Tyneside.

Reference was made to the recent campaign to reduce the reliance on single use plastics and it was suggested that an update be provided on the outcomes of the work undertaken to reduce plastic use

It was **agreed** that the following work programme for the 2018/19 municipal year be approved:

- An update on the pledge in relation to reducing the use of single use plastics;
- An examination of the measures to deal with overhanging branches;
- An examination of the effectiveness of the education in reducing litter; and
- An examination of the steps which are being taken to improve sustainability in relation to development at Killingworth Moor and Murton Gap.