

CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Environment Committee held on 12th April 2022 at 13:00pm via Zoom

Present: Councillors C Lattin (Chair), V Ashfield, D Freeman, R Friederichsen and S Walker.

Also present: Parish Clerk A Shanley, Vicki Burrell (DCC Waste Management) and Mr Steve Lindsay (member of the public)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None received.

2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

None received.

3. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 8th FEBRUARY 2022

The minutes of the meeting held on 8th February were unanimously agreed as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Mr Steve Lindsay advised that he was attending as a representative of the Elvet Residents Association and to hear discussions on item 7a. II) of the Agenda.

5. UPDATE ON THE PROPOSAL FOR COMMUNITY EMERGENCY PLANNING

Cllr C Lattin advised that there had been very little response to the communications around community emergency planning and asked all Members who are keen to progress this, to please contact her for a meeting outside of the Environment Committee in order to work out a plan for this piece of work.

6. DISCUSSION WITH PAULA GEORGE AND VICKI BURRELL (DCC) ON THE WORK OF STRATEGIC WASTE MANAGEMENT TEAM

The Chair welcomed Vicki Burrell to the meeting to talk to the Committee on the work of the strategic waste management team at DCC. The Chair introduced the item by highlighting that waste disposal is one of the biggest issues in the City of Durham parish and thanked Vicki and her team for their work.

Vicki began her presentation by giving an overall picture of the waste management situation in County Durham. Vicki advised that there are more than 300 frontline and office staff working at DCC on waste management, with 86 frontline refuse & recycling vehicles. Vicki advised that, across County Durham, there are a total of

12 Household Waste Recycling Centres and 1 mobile HWRC at Frosterley, 4 Waste Transfer Stations and 1 new composting facility.

Vicki advised that in 2020/21, County Durham households generated 243,492 tonnes of household waste:

- 249,736 bins 37.3 % reuse, recycling and composting (2020/21)
- bins to be collected every week 99.86% successful per quarter (Alternate Weekly Collection (AWC) scheme)
- Over 2,000 bulky collections carried out every year
- Over 66,000 garden waste subscriptions.

Vicki advised that she and her team had led on a number of public awareness campaigns in relation to waste management and recycling – some of these campaigns included the 'Love Food Hate Waste' campaign, the single-use plastics campaign, home composting, real nappies and more.

Vicki also advised that she and her team lead on a number of reuse initiatives such as 'Green Move Out', furniture reuse schemes, single-use plastic prevention, water refill scheme and more.

Vicki advised that waste contamination is a big issue in County Durham. Vicki advised that the main contaminants found in recycling bins in County Durham are: black bags, pet waste, nappies, food waste and textiles.

Vicki advised that the issues relating to these items are as follows:

Black Bags – items placed in black bags can't be recycled because the collection crews can't see what it is in the bag and it could contain contaminated recycling/waste. Black bags cannot be recycled easily.

Mixed plastics including polystyrene – markets for plastics other than bottles, pots, tubs and trays are limited (e.g., films such as bread bags).

Textiles – cannot be processed at the sorting plant and can damage the sorting equipment.

Vicki also advised that DCC was actively involved in garden waste management. Vicki advised that DCC's inhouse service began in May 2020; operating Monday & Saturday collections (during Covid-19). County Durham currently has over 66,000 subscriptions with over 17,500 tonnes collected per annum.

Vicki also provided the Committee with an overview of the Teesside Energy from Waste (EfW) plant. Vicki advised that EfW is the process of making energy in the form of electricity and/or heat from the incineration (burning) of waste. Vicki advised that the residual waste is transported by large trucks to the Energy from Waste plant located next to the River Tees at Haverton Hill in Billingham. It is operated by Suez (Waste Management Company) on behalf of a number of councils in the north east region. Vicki advised that there is a 96% average landfill diversion rate from this site and there is currently a new Multi-Council Procurement post 2025 underway.

Vicki advised that DCC also operates a number of other collection services such as Clinical Waste Collection (free), Bulky Waste Collections (charged), Household Waste Recycling Centres (free), "Bring" sites (free) and Trade Waste Collections (charged).

Vicki advised that, like every other service, Covid-19 had had a massive impact on operations.

Vicki advised that refuse and recycling collections had been prioritised, with extra resources to operate the service (e.g. retained vehicles).

Vicki advised that staff from highways and leisure had been redeployed to support the service during the peak of lockdown.

Vicki advised that the garden waste service had initially been delayed by 1 month but the service restarted in May 2020 operating on a Monday & Saturday covering the 65,135 collections. Bulky waste collections were stopped for a time but this service was restarted in May 2020.

Vicki also advised that there had been an initial closure of HWRCs but these were reopened with covid restrictions and measures in place e.g. increased traffic management on sites.

Vicki advised that, over the last decade alone, DCC had moved to alternate weekly collections (from 7 systems), agreed new recycling and EfW contracts, refurbished 4 waste transfer stations, agreed a new HWRC contract and carried out a refurbishment of Stainton Grove HWRC.

Vicki also advised that garden waste collections had also been introduced to include the most urban areas of the county, DCC had virtually eliminated waste to landfill and had introduced easier reporting, self-service and permit schemes.

Vicki also provided an overview of the Environment Act.

Vicki advised that the Bill was first published on 15th October 2019 and covers resource management, water, air pollution, biodiversity and conservation.

Vicki advised that the Act was passed on 10th November 2021 and sections 44-66 cover RAWS.

Vicki advised that, amongst other things, the Act will specifically enable Government to:

- Recover costs of managing products at end of life from 'producers'
- Establish extended producer responsibility schemes using the new Environment Bill powers and EA95 PRO powers
- Implement UK-wide regulations where this has been agreed by the Ministers of each nation
- They also address loss of ECA 2(2) – under which the Batteries, ELV and WEEE producer responsibility regulations are made

Vicki advised that a number of key aims and challenges currently sit within her work directive. These included the agreement of the multi-authority waste treatment procurement, future cost pressures and savings, potential mandatory food waste collections, potential mandatory garden waste collections, the introduction of a lower emission fleet and establishing a viable circular economy.

The Chair thanked Vicki for her presentation and opened the floor to questions.

The Clerk asked if something could be done to improve the information on the recycling bins in the market place. Vicki advised that these bins are 'on-street' recycling bins and there is a national problem with 'on-street' recycling bins. Vicki advised that there are severe levels of contamination within 'on-street' recycling bins.

Vicki advised that, with Durham City being a World Heritage Site, the team is limited in the type and style of bins which can be installed in the Market Place.

Vicki advised that the Head of Service at DCC is aware of this and is hoping to meet to discuss this issue with relevant stakeholders.

Cllr V Ashfield advised that there is a lot of interest in the issue of tackling single-use plastics amongst school pupils and the Parish Council has been funding Terracycle boxes for those schools who have requested them to support them in their efforts of recycling. Vicki advised that there is a lot of information on the Council's single-use plastics campaign on their website: <https://www.durham.gov.uk/singleuseplastics>

Cllr V Ashfield also highlighted that there is not a single bin by the riverbank between Maiden Castle to Baths Bridge and there is an issue of waste along this stretch of river. Vicki advised that she would look into this.

Cllr R Friederichsen highlighted that Durham City has a lot of food takeout premises and asked if some further proactive work could be done with these sorts of premises around recycling. Cllr R Friederichsen also expressed his concerns at the burning of waste in the future as part of the Council's strategy.

Vicki advised that she is hoping to work with Durham BID more closely regarding a strategy for business recycling.

The Chair thanked Vicki for joining the meeting and for her fantastic presentation and asked all Members to direct any further questions of Vicki to the Clerk so that they may be answered in writing. At this point, Vicki thanked the Committee and left the meeting.

7. DISCUSSION OF ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE PRIORITIES:

7a. To decide:

I) Planning the Clean for the Queen litter picking event – Sunday 29th May 2022

The Clerk advised that the Parish Council is organising a City-wide litter picking event on 29th May 2022 in the run-up to the Platinum Jubilee celebrations. The Clerk advised that he would be engaging with local residents' groups through the Parish Council's Community Residents' Association Forum meeting to advertise the event. The Committee thanked the Clerk for his work on this and **agreed** to be part of this event and to support this as much as possible.

II) Report by Cllr R Friederichsen on Clean Air and Active Travel

Cllr R Friederichsen presented his report on Clean Air and Active Travel to the Committee. Cllr R Friederichsen advised that the motivation for this report is to ensure that Members are aware of the pollution situation in the City, as this is a complex issue where it is clear that a number of actions are required to tackle this problem.

Cllr R Friederichsen advised that he felt that the Parish Council – in conjunction with the County Council – could really take a lead on tackling traffic-based pollution.

Cllr R Friederichsen advised that, because of poor air quality, an Air Quality Management Area was established in Durham City in 2011, a Durham City Air Quality Action Plan was published in 2016, and Durham County Council (DCC) is required to prepare and submit an Annual Air Quality Status Report (AAQSR).

Cllr R Friederichsen advised that Durham City is the area most affected by poor air quality area in County Durham; in particular, the 2020 AAQSR report highlights the Apex Corner (comprising the junction of Church Street and Hallgarth Street) in New Elvet, Alexandria Crescent, and Gilesgate as an issue.

Mr Steve Lindsay advised that the Elvet Residents Association (ERA) received a report from Cllr R Friederichsen and others on a plan for streets in Elvet. Steve advised that the ERA is really keen to see a switch away from the primacy given to cars at present in favour of other sustainable transport means, e.g. cycling and walking.

Steve advised that the nitrogen dioxide levels in the Church Street area were very high and concerning. Steve advised that there were a number of measures the ERA would like to see introduced to help the situation, these include:

- Reducing the speed limit in Church Street to 20mph.
- Installing a two-way cycle lane to Church Street.
- Making the street a one-way system.
- Moving the traffic lights back outside the vicarage.
- The pavements at Church Street to be expanded.

Cllr C Lattin advised that she was aware that the ERA did not feel that the existing plans from DCC to tackle this issue were insufficient.

Cllr D Freeman advised that he felt that DCC needed to do more on this issue as a matter of priority. Cllr D Freeman advised that one-way systems have been considered previously for Church Street and highlighted that this would inevitably move more traffic into Hallgarth Street.

Cllr D Freeman also advised that DCC will not consider introducing speed limits of 20mph in areas where the average speed is over 23mph. Cllr D Freeman advised that he felt that this issue is a City-wide issue and the Council should be looking at this as such and not an individual street issue.

Members **agreed** that SPACE (Safe Pedestrian and Cycling Environment) for Durham be invited to the May 2022 Environment Committee meeting to present their vision and suggested solutions.

Members also **agreed** to support a virtual event with relevant civil society groups to mark Clean Air Day on 16 June 2022 with the purpose of educating and engaging stakeholders, and encouraging action in relation to the issues raised in Cllr R Friederichsen's report.

III) Report from Neighbourhood Warden – discussion on priorities for 2022/23

The Committee considered the content of the Neighbourhood Warden SLA annual report from the Neighbourhood Warden manager and agreed that this SLA is having a very positive impact on the City and the Committee thanked the Neighbourhood Wardens for their work. The Committee also **agreed** that, in seeking to extend the SLA for a further 2 years, the Parish Council should request at least a report every 2 months from the Neighbourhood Warden on what has been achieved. The Clerk **agreed** to discuss this further with the Neighbourhood Warden manager.

IV) Discussion of Durham in Bloom priorities for 2022-23 – to include proposal on Providence Row by local students and green wall at Allergate/ East Atherton Street.

The Committee **agreed** the following priorities for Durham in Bloom for 2022/23:

Bulb planting - £2,000
Flower towers (£700 each) – 2x North Road, 1 x St. John's Road, 2 x Freeman's Quay area near to passport office and Durham Sixth Form college, 1 x Clayport library.
Wildflowering of Providence Row (subject to DCC approval) - £500
Greenwalling at Allergate/ East Atherton Street - £1,000
Plants for Viaduct planters - £1,500
Trees/ plants during the year - £800

Cllr V Ashfield agreed to discuss the wildflowering of Providence Row with officers at Durham County Council and report back to the next Environment Committee meeting.

7b. To complete:

I) Update on carbon literacy training

The Clerk confirmed that the carbon literacy training for Parish Councillors would be delivered by the Centre for Alternative Technology and the dates for these training sessions are as follows:

24th May (beginning at 1pm and lasting 2 hours)
25th May (beginning at 1pm and lasting 2 hours)
26th May (beginning at 2pm and lasting 2 hours)

The Clerk advised that the Centre for Alternative Technology would be sending out links to join these virtual training sessions in the second week of May and he would be distributing these as soon as he receives these.

II) Update on the ecological emergency resolution and the use of glyphosates in the City of Durham parish area

The Clerk confirmed that a letter had been submitted to Amanda Hopgood, Leader of Durham County Council on this issue and the Parish Council is awaiting a response to this.

III) Update on the work to improve the River Wear – including report by Durham Cathedral on improving the Wear

The Chair highlighted that a new group has been established – known as the 'Durham City Riverscape Community (DCRC)' – which included a number of key stakeholders such as the Cathedral, Wear Rivers Trust, DCC and hopefully the Parish Council. The group is being led by local residents Martin Hiles and Tim Hudson and has already been successful in carrying out litter picking and invasive non-native species removal with volunteers. The Chair advised that she would be in continuing dialogue with the group and will report on this to Council.

The Clerk advised that he was still awaiting a copy of the report by Durham Cathedral on improving the River Wear and hoped to have a copy to Committee Members as soon as possible for their consideration.

IV) Report on Section 106 projects in the Elvet and Gilesgate division –lower Claypath bus shelters

The Clerk advised Members that this application is currently on hold. Durham County Council has advised that they are presently not accepting any new Section 106 applications for the Elvet and Gilesgate division as the Council is looking at some Levelling Up funding options this Summer for works to the riverbanks in Durham City. The Clerk advised that he has asked to be kept updated on this, so as not to delay this project.

7c. To note:

The Committee noted that the following projects were nearing completion stage:

- I) Installation of Mosaic art work at the UHND
- II) Progressing the blue plaques scheme
- III) 7 Hills of Durham project update

8. AOB

None received.

9. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS


Tuesday 10th May 2022 – 1pm

Tuesday 14th June 2022 – 1pm

Tuesday 12th July 2022 – 1pm

There being no further business, the Chair thanked all those present for attending and for their contributions and closed the meeting.

Signed,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Cathy Lath".

**Chair of the Parish Council's Environment Committee
(12th April 2022)**