

GATESHEAD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL
COMMUNITIES AND PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MEETING

Monday, 18 April 2016

PRESENT: Councillor P Dillon (Chair)

Councillors: T Graham, B Coates, D Davidson, J Graham,
M Hood, H Hughes, K McCartney, J McClurey and
C McHugh

APOLOGIES: Councillors L Caffrey, P Craig, S Dickie, K Dodds,
J Simpson and A Wheeler

CPL34 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 March 2016 were agreed as a correct record.

CPL35 ODOUR ISSUES EMANATING FROM LANDFILL SITES IN THE WEST OF THE BOROUGH

The Committee considered a report providing an update on the issues arising from landfill sites in the west of the Borough and in particular to highlight progress on the actions agreed at the Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee in March 2015 and the original feedback on these actions reported in September 2015.

The Committee has previously received feedback on actions points 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9 and 12 and where necessary these points have been completed. The Committee received an update on action points 8, 10 and 11.

Action 8:

That a process for the Council's cabinet, to invite comments from the relevant advisory group on applications for EA permits be explored.

Update:

An advisory group was set up to provide comments on the EA consultation on the Permit variation application for Blaydon Quarry. The response was endorsed by Cabinet at their meeting on 15 September 2015. The reviewed permit has been issued by the Environment Agency.

Action 10:

That the Council make representations to the current DEFRA consultation on waste crime and that the link to the consultation be published.

Update:

The Government has published its response to the consultation on the above and a link to this is provided below:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/466879/waste-crime-consult-sum-resp.pdf

Action 11:

That there be a greater focus on enforcement to ensure EA permits are complied with and to look at the type of evidence required to pursue enforcement in relation to odour.

Update:

The Environment Agency continues to actively regulate both the Blaydon and Path Head landfill sites to ensure they comply with the permits they signed up to and the impacts on the local community are kept to a minimum.

In recent weeks the Environment Agency has served 3 Enforcement Notices to ensure the permits are complied with. Two of these enforcement notices were served on Suez in relation to odour problems at the Path Head site. The ongoing odour problems at Path Head remain subject to a formal investigation by the Environment Agency.

Blaydon Update

The revised planning permission was granted for this site in September 2015. This included a number of conditions that required further information to be submitted by particular dates or when particular works commenced on site.

- a) the submission of planning conditions 2, 7, 20, 24, 27 (and 11) which should have been discharged by 2 October 2015
- b) the submission of planning conditions 3, 4, 12, 13, 14, 22, 23, 25, 26, 28, 31 and 32 due by 2 March 2016

At the most recent meeting with the operator and their agent (29 Jan), the operator agreed to submit all of the required information by the end of February (both those that needed to be submitted by October and March). However, this information was not submitted and is still outstanding. As such the operation is in breach of these planning conditions, so, in light of this consideration is being given to next steps, including taking enforcement action.

The first meeting of the Community Liaison Group following the grant of planning permission took place on 30 March 2016 following a 9 month gap where no meeting took place. One of the requirements of the revised planning permission is that the operator must host three liaison Group meetings a year one of which must include a site visit. The constitution for this meeting is being prepared.

At this meeting the operator, the Environment Agency and the Local Planning Authority gave an update and residents had the opportunity to raise issues that they had about the site.

The Environment Agency produces regular updates on its website relating to this site. The most recent update (1 April) can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/blaydon-quarry-landfill-newcastle-upon-tyne/blaydon-quarry-landfill-newcastle-upon-tyne>

In summary tipping continues in cell 7, which is in the central part of the site. Tipping in this area is likely to continue for approximately 3 years before moving in to cell 8 which will be the final cell.

The Environment Agency has asked for the cells to the east of the site to be capped this spring, which will allow these areas to be restored back to grassland in accordance with the planning requirements this summer. The Environment Agency is also expecting additional gas extraction wells to be drilled in these completed areas to maintain full extraction across the site.

Capping work is due to commence on 25 April subject to favourable weather conditions. Preparatory placement of soils has already started.

The electricity generating plant continues to run at full capacity, with any additional gas burnt in the standby flare.

In the last few weeks the Environment Agency has received odour complaints on its incident hotline and is instructing Octagon to take steps to reduce odour coming from this site.

On 19 February 2016 the Environment Agency served an enforcement notice on Octagon to submit proposals to remediate odours coming from the site. This notice was complied with and their proposals are being assessed.

Path Head Update

The Environment Agency produces regular updates on its website relating to this site. The most recent update (1 April) can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/path-head-landfill-gateshead/path-head-landfill-site>

The Environment Agency is continuing to instruct Suez to take steps to reduce the odours and comply with their environmental permit. Our investigations have identified odour sources on site and we have informed Suez that further improvements are required to the gas management system on site.

The Environment Agency served notice on Suez to require engineering plans detailing the installation of additional gas extraction wells and capping works. This Enforcement Notice has now been complied with but a further enforcement notice

has been served on Suez to ensure this work is carried out within the agreed deadlines.

The Environment Agency are also carrying out significant additional odour monitoring around both the Path Head and Blaydon sites. It has also installed a monitoring station which will constantly monitor air quality downwind of Path Head for three months. Following that, the station would be moved downwind from Blaydon.

Health Issues – Public Health England and Gateshead Council's Public Health team have met with local councillors and have been working with local GPs and the Environment Agency to review residents' concerns in light of findings from monitoring at the site. Whilst the odours are distressing and can cause symptoms such as sore throats, nausea, headaches and dizziness, the substances that cause the smells are not themselves harmful to health. The Council has provided updates about the health concerns of the odours on its website

<http://www.gateshead.gov.uk/Building%20and%20Development/Planning/Gases-and-odour-at-Path-Head-landfill-site.aspx>

The Environment Agency, Gateshead Council and Public Health England will maintain a partnership approach to tackle this issue and will continue to keep people informed on both the Environment Agency and the Councils Websites.

Next Steps

Monitoring of the sites will continue, including joint visits between the Council and the EA.

The planning conditions will continue to be monitored and enforcement action taken where necessary.

Regular updates will be given to keep people informed on both the Environment Agency and the Council Websites.

- RESOLVED -
- i) that the Committee noted the completed actions
 - ii) that a meeting be convened with the Environment Agency at the earliest opportunity
 - iii) that lobbying nationally and a review of the legislative framework in place for the powers and responsibilities of the Environment Agency be undertaken as soon as practicable

CPL36 REVIEW OF OPPORTUNITIES TO PROMOTE RURAL GATESHEAD - FINAL REPORT

The Committee received the final report and findings of the recent review which examined the promotion of rural Gateshead as both a tourism and business location.

As a result of the evidence gathering sessions and site visit the following emerging issues were identified:

- The untapped potential of many of the boroughs rural assets and a lack of visitor accommodation
- The need to continue to work with local, regional, national and international partners to grow the number of day visitors and overnight stays
- The need to work with the private sector to maximise the investment in the tourism businesses infrastructure.
- The lack of suitable, affordable business space in rural areas
- The need to improve business communications and collaboration and ensure access to business support.
- Recognition of the need for enhanced partnership working to maximise the economic benefit for rural communities, and
- Recognition of the impact of the rural area on health and wellbeing

The Committee were advised that the key findings from the OSC's review of promoting rural Gateshead as a tourism and business location:

- The Council should maximise the visitor potential of rural assets, thereby creating the best possible environment for tourism, new business development and job creation. Further research should be undertaken into the development of a 4 star hotel and to explore how the wider accommodation offer can be enhanced. The economic potential of key sites such as Gibside and the Angel of the North should be encouraged.
- There is scope to ensure that Council spending in the rural area seeks to maximise benefits to local businesses, residents and visitors – to make best use of resources and impact multiple agendas.
- There is scope to improve the tourism offer by increasing the choice and quality of the food offer, and also to identify gaps in the provision of rural services.
- Highly skilled people are needed if the tourism potential of rural Gateshead is to be realised. Apprenticeship opportunities should be explored.
- There is the need to better coordinate the promotion of events in the borough, including those of public private and voluntary sector bodies. This would help promote the borough as a day visitor location and support the growth of jobs and businesses.
- There is a need to continue to support the work of the Land of Oak and Iron Landscape Partnership and maximise the potential for economic and cultural benefits arising from the programme.
- Discussions have highlighted a desire for NGL to have a more proactive role in marketing Gateshead as a whole including maximising the opportunities for promoting the rural areas of the borough.
- Research has demonstrated a continued lack of high quality, affordable business space in rural communities, therefore support to develop new enterprise hubs should continue, including the opportunities for existing cultural venue to generate income to support their future sustainability.
- The Council provides a borough wide business support offer, however opportunities to enhance this should be considered. External funding should

be sought where possible to provide business support and help overcome isolation and provide networking opportunities. Opportunities to train people in key growth sectors should be encouraged as part of an approach to create higher level jobs in rural areas.

- RESOLVED -
- i) that the final recommendations be agreed
 - ii) that the findings be reported to Cabinet

CPL37 REVIEW OF DOMESTIC ENERGY MANAGEMENT / FUEL POVERTY - MONITORING REPORT

The Committee received the monitoring report setting out progress made against the recommendations agreed by the OSC following the domestic energy management and fuel poverty review. The review made recommendations to help reduce fuel poverty and improve residents' management of their energy bills.

Key achievements were noted since the last update report and the Committee were advised that the Council and partners will continue to progress initiatives that respond to the agreed recommendations and ultimately improve energy in domestic properties and reduce fuel poverty.

- RESOLVED -
- i) that the OSC is satisfied with progress against actions to date
 - ii) that future update reports be included within annual reports for Carbon Emissions monitoring

CPL38 COMMUNITY SAFETY SUB-OSC - REVIEW OF THE PREVENT AGENDA

The Committee received details of the Final Report of the Community Safety Sub OSC following a series of evidence gathering sessions that were held throughout 2015/16 in relation to its review of the Prevent Agenda.

Following a series of evidence gathering sessions, the Sub-Committee identified no significant gaps in the current arrangements that are in place. However, in order to ensure we remain proactive in addressing future challenges and continue to have strong and robust processes in place to safeguard those at risk of being drawn into extremism, the Sub-Committee has identified a number of suggested actions.

The recommendations are designed to help build upon, and strengthen our existing approach and have been aligned with the three themes identified within the national Prevent Duty Guidance published by Government earlier in the year – and include: *Leadership, Working in Partnership and Capabilities*.

- RESOLVED -
- i) that the information be noted.
 - ii) that the report be referred to cabinet for approval
 - iii) that six monthly updates in relation to the progress made against delivering the draft recommendations are submitted

CPL39 ANNUAL REPORT OF TALISMAN

The Committee received a report providing an annual update of the TALISMAN (Tenant and Leaseholder Independent Scrutiny Management) Panel.

The Committee has, as part of previous update reports, received details of the findings from the following reviews that TALISMAN have carried out:-

- Anti-social behaviour case management
- Rent and Income
- Void management

TALISMAN also carried out:-

Review of Customer Services

Review of Lettings – Hard to Let Properties

Recruitment and development of TALISMAN members

TALISMAN has completed its review of hard to let properties and is currently pulling together its final report which it will present to TGHC Customers and Communities Committee in May 2016.

TALISMAN has drawn up a shortlist of five potential areas for its next scrutiny review. It will agree which area it wants to focus on at its next meeting in April.

Members of TALISMAN will continue to receive a six monthly development review with the Independent Mentor. The reviews also provide an opportunity to identify any collective and individual training needs.

The Panel continues to develop and it is expected that this will evolve further during the next year.

RESOLVED - i) that the information be noted
 ii) that further annual progress reports be brought back to the OSC in order to scrutinise the effectiveness of co-regulation

CPL40 ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee received the proposals for the development of the work programme for OSCs and sets out the provisional work programme for the Communities and Place OSC for the municipal year 2016-17.

The Committee agreed that the review topic for 2016-17 should be 'Review of impact of Gambling on the Borough' and the case study should be 'Street Cleanliness – Enforcement, Education and Community Involvement' with partner feedback from the Health and Wellbeing Board.

RESOLVED - i) that the review topic and areas to be progressed as case studies for 2016-17 be agreed

- ii) that the OSC's provisional work programme for 2016-17 be endorsed and referred to Council on 26 May 2016 for agreement
- iii) that further reports be brought to committee to identify and additional issues which the Committee may be asked to consider

Chair.....