

CLIMATE CHANGE AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Climate Change and Communities Scrutiny Committee of the Bolsover District Council held in Committee Room 1, The Arc, Clowne on Monday, 23rd June 2025 at 14:00 hours.

PRESENT:-

Members:-

Councillor Ashley Taylor in the Chair

Councillors Anne Clarke (Vice-Chair), Cathy Jeffery and Sandra Peake.

Officers:- Steve Brunt (Strategic Director of Services), Samantha Bentley (Service Manager (Residential and Technical Support) Environmental Health), Richard Winter (Climate Change Officer), Thomas Dunne-Wragg (Scrutiny Officer) and Matthew Kerry (Governance and Civic Officer).

Also in attendance at the meeting, observing, was Councillor Rob Hiney-Saunders (Portfolio Holder for the Environment).

CLI1-25/26 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor Catherine Tite.

CLI2-25/26 URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

There were no urgent items of business to be considered.

CLI3-25/26 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

CLI4-25/26 MINUTES

Moved by Councillor Cathy Jeffery and seconded by Councillor Ashley Taylor

RESOLVED that the minutes of a Climate Change and Communities Scrutiny Committee held on 8th April 2025 be approved as a true and correct record.

CLI5-25/26 LIST OF KEY DECISIONS AND ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE

The Committee considered the List of Key Decisions and Items.

RESOLVED that the List of Key Decisions and Items to be considered in the private document be noted.

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CLI6-25/26

COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROGRAMME - MEMBER UPDATE

The Service Manager presented the report to the Committee to provide Members with an update on the Community Outreach Service delivered by the Environmental Health Team.

The Community Outreach Service (the 'Service') was a well-established, longstanding service delivered by the Council.

The Service was ultimately aiming to assist residents to live or remain in a safe and healthy home, and to assist their overall health and wellbeing. The Service delivered support across the District to some of the Council's most vulnerable residents.

The Service delivery focussed on the following themes:

- Support to ensure residents were receiving any financial help available;
- Help with budgeting to reflect residents' individual circumstances;
- Referral to debt advice agencies;
- Support in tackling food and fuel poverty;
- Help to deal with letters and forms;
- Referral to specialist agencies to meet the resident's needs;
- Help with improving physical, mental and emotional wellbeing;
- Close working with partner agencies to support families in need of additional support; and,
- Interventions.

Whilst the Service was flexible to the needs of residents in need of help and support, the demand for the Service had predominantly been around advice and support for financial assistance.

It was intended to provide a friendly, approachable Service focussing on individual assistance. While telephone assistance could be provided, the aim was to provide face-to-face, in person connections via outreach or home visits.

Mobile phone numbers were used rather than customers accessing the Service through the Council's telephonic services – to avoid wary customers being deterred from making contact and accessing the help they might need.

The Service received a substantial number of service requests. In the 2024/25 financial year, the number of service requests equated to approximately 13 cases per week, between 2 FTEs. The table below demonstrated how the number of cases had risen significantly since the COVID-19 Global Pandemic (and also perhaps as a result of the Cost of Living crisis).

Number of Cases Received by the Service by Financial Year	
Financial year	Number of cases
2018/19	499
2019/20	450
2020/21	438
2021/22	599
2022/23	777

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2023/24	703
2024/25	682

Due to the increased demand for the Service over recent years, the Council had to make minor changes to the Service to accommodate current needs. However, during the busiest times, it was likely that customers could wait up to two weeks for an appointment. This did depend on priority and risk though, with the most urgent cases being brought forward.

Customers were generally satisfied with the appointment times being offered – to date, the Council had never received a complaint about the Service.

For each case received, there were a wide range of interventions that might be delivered. Cases could often result in more than one visit due to their complexity. Interventions such as assisting in the completion of forms for Personal Independence Payment (PIP) meant a visit could take approximately 2 hours.

Therefore, of the 13 cases received on average per week, there would be cases that were ongoing with multiple interventions and could range from those completed within an hour or two, to those requiring multiple hours of input.

The most frequently recorded actions during 2024/25 were inevitably 'visit' and 'telephone call'. However, when considering the types of interventions made, most frequent interventions included:

- Benefit checks;
- Discretionary Housing Payment applications;
- Council Tax;
- Financial advice referral;
- Housing applications;
- Payment Plans;
- Pension Credit;
- PIP & Disability Living Allowance;
- Housing Benefit & Universal Credit;
- Housing issues; and,
- Assisting customers completing forms.

These intervention types demonstrated how the demand for the Service was predominantly around customers' finances.

The Service was very well integrated with the range of other services provided by the Council, as well as from external organisations. These strong links meant that cases were easily cross referred, ensuring that customers received a wide suite of intervention and support, as opposed to a narrow, focussed intervention which dealt with only finite matters.

These strong links were evidenced by the source of the Service requests, summarised in the table further below. As the Service was so well established (and despite limited publicity), approximately one third of all cases in 2024/25 were self-referrals and the customer directly requesting support.

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Almost one quarter of cases were referred by external professionals. These were mainly from Derbyshire County Council (DCC) Adult Care and Children's Services. It was also notable that approximately 20% of all cases handled were referred from the Housing Department and were the Council's social tenants. This was a disproportionate figure when considering the housing tenures across the District. However, it did demonstrate how well the Service was integrated and received.

Referrals into the Service during 2024/25	
Source of referral	Approximate percentage of all cases received
Housing Department	20%
Contact Centre	12%
Other internal services (Benefits and Environmental Health)	4%
External professionals incl. Social Care, DCC, Community Health, Schools	24%
Self-referral	30%
Other (incl. not recorded)	10%

Almost all service requests resulted in a visit to the home or a meeting place in the community. This face-to-face support provided officers insight into customers' circumstances, allowing them to identify interventions over and above those initially requested by the customer.

Unlike some other services which were often simple referral schemes, the Service aimed to deliver direct support by being present with the customer. This direct support could include assisting in completing forms, handling telephone calls, and helping customers better equip themselves to handle their affairs. The case studies attached in Appendix 1 showed the breadth and detail behind the Service.

It was accepted that promotion of the Service could be an area of development moving forward. However, this had to be finely balanced with the level of resources available so as not to create a backlog of referrals and mismanage customer expectations.

A Member thanked the Community Outreach Service Team for their excellent work. Noting that while it was important to not promote the Service too much (and demand outstretch resources), the Member asked if outreach could take place additionally at one location in Shirebrook. The Service Manager agreed to investigate outreach at the indicated site.

To a question from the Chair on the Service collaborating with similar external service providers, the Service Manager informed the Service did make referrals to these organisations and vice versa – if one service was struggling with enquiries, they could refer to ensure customers were assisted / advised in appropriate time.

Moved by Councillor Sandra Peake and seconded by Councillor Anne Clarke
RESOLVED that the Committee note the report.

The Service Manager left the meeting at 14:32 hours.

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CLI17-25/26

REVIEW OF COUNCIL'S APPROACH TO CARBON REDUCTION - POST-SCRUTINY MONITORING AND UPDATE FROM THE CLIMATE CHANGE OFFICER

The Scrutiny Officer presented the Post-Scrutiny Monitoring Report on the recent Review of Council's Approach to Carbon Reduction to the Committee.

The Committee had put together 9 recommendations, as outlined in Appendix 1, which would enable the Council to clarify immediate priorities for action as well as longer term planning to ensure the Council and District had achieved Net Zero by 2050.

6 out of 9 recommendations had been achieved – 2 were on track and 1 had been extended. The outstanding recommendations were on track to be completed in late 2025. It was noted that the Council had established a Climate Change Officer in July 2024, who was overseeing the completion of the outstanding recommendations.

Revised target dates and detail on the actions and progress taken were set out in Appendix 2.

The Climate Change Officer informed the Council's transportation emissions would increase due to additional vehicles in the fleet. The Strategic Director of Services explained functions previously delivered by North East Derbyshire District Council were now in-house. The Climate Change Officer added the use of Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) in lieu of diesel from April 2025 would result in around a tenth of emissions – actual emissions and savings would be reported when available from April 2026. This equated to 841 tonnes CO2 reduction to 12 tonnes (approx.).

The Strategic Director of Services informed the use of HVO had been delayed due to the higher cost of the fuel in previous years – it was currently 8-9 pence more per litre, but the environmental benefits outweighed this cost.

The Committee was informed that while Battery Electric Vehicles had been considered, the initial upfront price per vehicle and their high devaluation did not offset the lower running costs.

The Strategic Director of Services left the meeting at 14:44 hours.

The Scrutiny Officer noted the Portfolio Holder for the Environment was meeting with the Climate Change Officer monthly. Considerations were being made for Local Government Reorganisation and the Council's future corporate plans.

The other recommendations and their current statuses were discussed by the Committee.

The Climate Change Officer offered Members could request meetings be arranged at any point to discuss any / all climate change issues.

Moved by Councillor Sandra Peake and seconded by Councillor Anne Clarke

RESOLVED that: 1) Scrutiny Members note the progress against the review recommendations;

- 2) Scrutiny Members acknowledge any exceptions to delivery and clarify the additional action required by the service;

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- 3) Scrutiny Members make its report and findings public, in accordance with Part 4.5.17(4) of the Council's Constitution; and,
- 4) Officers continue to implement the recommendations and submit a further report in six months' time highlighting progress and any exceptions to delivery.

CLI8-25/26

REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S APPROACH TO ENVIRONMENTAL DESPOILMENT EDUCATION AND ENFORCEMENT - FORMAL APPROVAL BY COMMITTEE

The Scrutiny Officer presented the completed report for the recent Review of the Council's Approach to Environmental Despoilment Education and Enforcement to the Committee.

The Committee had agreed to undertake a review of the Council's approach to environmental despoilment education and enforcement, as part of its 2024/25 Work Programme.

The issue was initially raised due to concerns about environmental despoilment in the District, including fly-tipping, littering, and dog fouling, which not only degraded the aesthetic value of the District but also posed significant risks to public health, safety, and local biodiversity.

In May 2025, the Environment Secretary announced further measures to tackle waste crime, including a review of local authority vehicle seizure powers to better support local authorities in dealing with fly-tipping.

Reforms to the waste carriers, brokers and dealers regime, as well as tighter controls on waste permit exemptions, would provide local authorities and the Environment Agency the stronger tools needed to crack down on illegal waste activity.

At the local level, the District faced unique challenges - despite its natural beauty and rich heritage, the District had struggled with persistent environmental despoilment, especially when compared to neighbouring areas.

This issue had significant implications for the well-being of local communities, impacting both the physical environment and public perception of the area.

The prevalence of environmental despoilment not only undermined residents' quality of life but also detracted from the District's appeal to visitors and potential investors.

Furthermore, environmental despoilment in shared public spaces could harm wildlife, pose hazards to public health and incur high costs for clean-up efforts.

This was a critical issue for the Council, as it aligned with both local priorities (incl. creating safer, cleaner neighbourhoods) and national objectives focused on waste reduction and environmental sustainability.

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The aims of the review were:

- That the Council reduced fly-tipping, littering and dog fouling to improve the aesthetical value of the District, protect local wildlife and reduce the cost of dealing with the unauthorised illegal depositing of waste by assessing the service's effectiveness in tackling environmental despoilment; and,
- That the Council became an excellent authority at 'keeping the District clean' rather than 'cleaning the District'.

The objectives agreed were:

1. Understand what Environmental Despoilment involved (fly tipping, littering and dog fouling), the Council's statutory duty and enforcement powers, and policies available to the Council;
2. Analyse the current data of incidents of environmental despoilment across the District;
3. Review the current arrangements undertaken by the Enforcement Team, Streetscene Services and Environmental Health to reduce or prevent Environmental Despoilment;
4. Improve public information / education on environmental despoilment; and,
5. Identify benchmarking opportunities and areas for improvement; ensure there was a clear strategy of enforcement action to improve the quality of the environment across the District.

The key issues identified for investigation included:

- Enforcement powers of the Council;
- Types of land covered by the Council's statutory duties (Agricultural, Back Alley, Commercial/Industrial, Council, Footpath/Bridleway, Highway, Private Land, Railway, Watercourse);
- Public information and education;
- Dog Fouling;
- Fly Tipping; and,
- Litter.

The Committee had put together 11 recommendations aimed at assisting the Council in improving the effectiveness of its response to environmental despoilment across the District.

The key findings from the review were:

- Environmental despoilment, particularly fly-tipping, remained a significant and persistent issue across the District, impacting both the quality of the environment and residents' sense of place;
- Current enforcement outcomes were limited, with performance data showing a low percentage of reports leading to fixed penalty notices or prosecutions, particularly for fly-tipping, dog fouling and littering;
- The Joint Environmental Health Service with North East Derbyshire District Council offered a useful foundation, but there was a clear need to explore alternative models or tools that could enhance enforcement capability and effectiveness;

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- Hotspot locations for fly-tipping required targeted action, including surveillance, signage, and operational task groups to focus efforts and improve accountability across departments;
- The coordination between departments – Streetscene, Community Safety and Environmental Health – must be strengthened through revived Corporate Enforcement Group meetings, structured evidence processes, and shared training opportunities;
- Public engagement and education were essential components for any long-term solution, with the Council needing to amplify its communications, provide clear guidance on waste disposal, and increase the visibility of enforcement actions to deter offending; and,
- Improved transparency and performance benchmarking through accessible, meaningful data and public updates which would help build community trust and demonstrate the Council's commitment to tackling environmental offences.

The Committee recognised that a strategic and joined-up approach was required to deliver sustained improvements.

The recommendations aimed to enhance enforcement activity, strengthen interdepartmental coordination, increase public awareness, and improve the visibility and responsiveness of the Council's actions.

If implemented effectively, the measures could help reduce environmental crime, promote civic responsibility, and create a cleaner, safer District for all residents.

The enforcement of environmental crime was discussed, with the use of good signage and social media encouraged.

Moved by Councillor Anne Clarke and seconded by Councillor Sandra Peake

RESOLVED that: 1) the Committee endorses the recommendations of the review outlined in Section 2 of the attached report (Appendix 2);

- 2) Committee submits the report to Executive for approval, in accordance with the Scrutiny Committee Terms of Reference – Part 3.6 (3) of the Constitution; and,
- 3) Following approval by Executive, monitoring of these recommendations by the Committee takes place over a twelve-month period via post scrutiny monitoring reports with an update report to the Committee at the end of the monitoring period.

CLI9-25/26

WORK PROGRAMME 2025/26

The Scrutiny Officer introduced the Work Programme 2025/26 and planned agenda items, attached at Appendix 1, to the Committee.

Moved by Councillor Anne Clarke and seconded by Councillor Sandra Peake

RESOLVED that Members review this report and the Programme attached at Appendix 1 for approval and amendment as required. All Members are advised to contact the Scrutiny Officer should they have any queries regarding future meetings.

The meeting concluded at 15:07 hours.