

MINUTES OF THE PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE HELD ON 12TH MARCH, 2019

Present: Councillor Mrs L Kennedy (Chair)
Mrs K Brace, S Cudlip, Mrs S Forster,
Ms R M Gratton, T Shepherd, B Taylor,
Miss L Willis.

Observer: Mrs G Bleasdale.

Apologies: Councillors Mrs B E Allen, E Bell,
Mrs J A Bell, S P Colborn, D Cummings,
Mrs V Cummings, G N Hepworth,
D McKenna, Mrs S Pratt, K Shaw.

Officers: Mrs D Rickaby (Town Clerk)
Ms A Rountree (Minute Taker).
Mrs J Knight (Finance Officer)

Prior to commencement of the meeting the Chair advised members of this Committee and members of the public that in line with the amendment to 'the public bodies (admission to meetings) act 1960', which came into force in August, 2014, parts of this meeting may be recorded by photographic, video and audio means.

PL17/19 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

Members were reminded prior to the start of the meeting of the need to disclose any interests, prejudicial or personal, in accordance with the Code of Conduct. Such interests must be submitted to the Town Clerk prior to the meeting.

Councillor Mrs Geraldine Bleasdale declared an interest and took no further part thereon.

PL18/19 PRESENTATION

The Chair welcomed Mr Robert Latimer who was in attendance to give Members an update on the pollution of the coastal waters at Whitburn.

Mr Latimer thanked Members for allowing him to attend the meeting to explain the current situation at Whitburn, Seaburn and Sunderland.

Mr Latimer stated that he had taken part in a Public Enquiry along with others including a Seaham Town Councillor in 2001 who did their best against the might of Northumbrian Water (NWL) and the EA who employed Barristers to put their case against them.

Conditions were placed on the Consent for the Interceptor Tunnel which meant that the discharge of untreated waste water, including fowl sewerage is only allowed when there is extreme rainfall or snow melt. The outlet from this tunnel at Whitburn and others into the River Wear are the main source of

sewerage pollution in the sea (which often flows to Seaham) because they are actually connected to the foul sewerage system to relieve its under-capacity, more is the fact that screens have been fitted to the Hendon 310mt overflow and screens offer no treatment at all.

The situation at Seaburn is going to be even worse as permission has been granted to build over 330 new houses, also 50 new houses have been built at Whitburn and all are connected to the existing sewerage system which is at bursting point and more, along with that, Hendon Treatment Works cannot treat any more sewerage. Again the discharge conditions from the CSOs at Whitburn, Seaburn and Roker that were agreed at the Public Inquiry are all in breach.

Mr Latimer stated that macerator pumps have been installed in the pumping stations including at St Peters, making it very difficult to identify what is sewerage debris and what is not. In the past Seaham people have been able to see sewerage on the coast and Mr Latimer questioned whether this was still the case as it may now be concealed). NWL claim that they spent £10m on storage, but the return flow records show that storage is not the problem, the under capacity in the system to cope with the everyday foul sewerage is the problem.

Mr Latimer stated that with the help of his MEP Jude Kirton-Darling he was allowed to petition the European Parliament Petitions Committee. Mr Latimer felt that the Commission, although they had a judgement against the UK, were not acting upon it to ensure the system was corrected. It was because of Mr Latimers petition that the EC provided him with a copy of the response showing that from the 1st January, 2018 to the middle of August 2018 over 300,000 tonnes of untreated sewage was discharged from the Whitburn outfall in one of the driest years on record, this amount also shocked the European Commission. This led to the European Commission intervening and only in January gave the UK Government two months to come up with a scheme to rectify the problem or face financial sanctions.

Mr Latimer stated that no one really knows the true number of discharges as now NWL and the EA have entered an agreement outside the Discharge Consent conditions. The EA are allowing any spill events of less than 30 minutes to be set as no spill. One pump at Whitburn discharges at 1,500 litres a second (1.5 tonnes a second) and there are three pumps at Whitburn, however only two can be used at any one time. Operating outside of the discharge consent conditions, it appears the situation is now so bad in relying on the tunnel to hold normal flows, NWL and the EA have agreed if rain is forecast they can empty the tunnel, by discharging whatever is in it to the sea. Mr Latimer stated that Councillors should remember that Whitburn offers no treatment.

As Mr Latimer mentioned previously permission has been given to build at Seaburn and Whitburn totalling 400 houses and bearing in mind that Hendon STW can only treat 1856l/s and this was in 2001 it is frightening to think how many houses have been added to the sewage system since then. Estates have been built in Doxford Park, Chapel Garth, Cherry Knowles and Ryhope

to name but a few but the situation is they are all being added to the already over capacity Sunderland Sewage System and no one seems to be doing anything. Mr Latimer stated that NWL are a private company and profit is their aim, not whether a sewer can cope or not.

Mr Latimer stated that the bathing waters are passing the standards (there are twenty tests carried out during the summer months only) and he doesn't accept that the bathing waters are passing the standards because in the past, analysing of the samples had to be done within 6 hours, that time has been extended to 24 hours and the samples are tested in Exeter which gives time for the bacteria to die.

Mr Latimer stated that he is aware that Seaham lies to the South of both Whitburn and Hendon but feels that having close links to Seaham people they should be aware that it is time that this sewage system is independently examined. Mr Latimer stated that he had recently attended a planning meeting where it was proposed to build 64 houses at Seaburn. Mr Latimer explained the situation to the Councillors about the overloaded sewage system, but felt that it fell on deaf ears because the developers had offered the Council £1m. The Council did not ask one question about Mr Latimer's concerns and Mr Latimer later found out that the connection point NWL gave for the foul sewage for this development was actually connected to the storm system.

The Chair opened the meeting for Members questions:

1. A Member questioned whether Durham County Councillors could put pressure on the MPs to help with this?

Mr Latimer stated that they could. The discharges from Whitburn could affect Seaham also with the tides. The screens only trap solids and they are not treating the sewerage.

2. A Member questioned whether the newspaper could take this up?

Mr Latimer stated that NWL are good at covering up

A Member requested that Seaham Town Council writes to Durham County Council with their concerns especially due to the new houses being built.

RECOMMENDED that the Town Clerk writes to Durham County Council expressing Members concerns with this issue.

PL19/19

PRESENTATION – ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Sergeant Peel was in attendance at the meeting to update Members regarding the Anti-Social Behaviour around Seaham.

Sgt Peel stated that it is a PACT priority over concerns regarding the Anti-Social Behaviour around Seaham Town Centre, Green Drive and Dawdon.

There has also been a rise of alcohol related anti-social behaviour around Dawdon and the Green Drive.

The Police have been patrolling the area and have been working closely with Durham County Council. Sgt Peel stated that a dispersal order had been given over one weekend around Church Street and Marlborough areas in mid-February.

There was a report on Seaham Have Your Say regarding incidents at the Marina in particular a lady was hit with a rock which is currently being investigated. Sgt Peel stated that a lot of things are put on SHYS which are not then reported to the Police. A Member stated that this is due to people stating that when they call the Police they do not come out to investigate.

Sgt Peel informed Members that the Police have been working around Church Street and in particular at an address in Green Street. There have been reports of people banging on a door at Green Street which is attracting trouble and the Police are looking to remove the person from the premises. Children have been removed from the streets due to alcohol consumption which has made them vulnerable. The Police are running a knife crime operation working alongside partners and schools to warn children of the dangers of knife crime. Sgt Peel also stated that Seaton Parish Council had funded 2 sprays to assist with the off-road motorbikes problem. If the Police are on patrol they can spray the bikers/bikes with this unique liquid spray which stays on for 3 months. One male has been arrested for drug supply and his bike was seized.

A Member questioned whether the Police have asked young people what they would like to do as activities to try and put a stop to anti-social behaviour. It was noted that there is a new boxing club for youths at Bruce's Gym and the take up rate for this has been good. A Member stated that the community centres also offer lots of activities such as karate and sports. Sgt Peel stated they did ask but they get a lot of different answers from young people. Another Member asked if this is something the Youth Council could do. They could engage with young people and ask them what they want to do activity wise.

Sgt Peel stated that the Police undertake meetings with children and the parents as a result of any misbehaviour. He noted that if a child is prosecuted for anti-social behaviour this could potentially jeopardise the parents tenancies if they are in rented accommodation.

A Member questioned Sgt Peel regarding knife crime and whether any young people in Seaham had been caught carrying knives. Sgt Peel stated that there had been none recently but couldn't give any actual figures. He stated that the Police had ran knife amnesties in the past and they had received a good response to these. He also noted that knife crimes in East Durham were more related to domestic situations within homes.

A Member questioned whether the Police were able to put pressure on parents if their children are arrested as he has had dealings with East

Durham Homes who never evict problem families. Sgt Peel stated that it was not an immediate sanction and there is a support programme. If a child is arrested for anti-social behaviour there are usually other factors to be considered and other agencies such as Social Services are usually involved. A Member asked what about if parents own their own properties. Sgt Peel stated that there is a premises closure that could be implemented but this is extreme and other measures would be looked at.

A Member also raised the issue of trying to contact the local Police station. Sgt Peel stated that calls were sent to a call centre around 10 years ago and all calls are now logged and recorded and he could not see this changing.

PI20/19 **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 12TH FEBRUARY, 2019**

RECOMMENDED the Minutes of these meetings, copies of which had been previously printed and circulated to each Member, be approved and signed as a correct record by the Chairman.

PL21/19 **PLANNING ISSUES**

a) **Monthly List**

RECOMMENDED the list of planning applications referred to all Councillors since the last meeting, namely 5577 to 5578 as circulated be noted.

PL22/19 **TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS ISSUES**

a) **Neighbourhood Services – Highways**

RECOMMENDED that Members note the information.

PL23/19 **PRESS OPPORTUNITIES**

RECOMMENDED that there were no press opportunities from this meeting.