



Committee and Date

Economy and Environment
Overview and Scrutiny Committee

23rd April 2024

ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 25 January 2024

**In the Shrewsbury/Oswestry Room, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury,
Shropshire, SY2 6ND**

2.00 pm - 3.37 pm

Responsible Officer: Sarah Townsend Committee Officer

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Present

Councillors Joyce Barrow (Chairman), Steve Davenport (Vice Chairman), Garry Burchett, Rosemary Dartnall, Julian Dean, Nick Hignett, Pamela Moseley, Ed Potter, Rob Wilson and Roy Aldcroft (Substitute) (substitute for Paul Wynn)

Prior to the consideration of the items on the agenda, the Chairman reported that Call Ins had been received in relation to the Cabinet decisions on 17th January 2024 regarding the Sports Village Transformation and Parking Tariffs, Operations and Development. These decisions would be considered at a meeting of the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee, hopefully within the next two weeks.

23 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Paul Wynn (Councillor Roy Aldcroft was in attendance as his substitute) and Councillor Roger Evans.

24 Disclosable Interests

None were received.

25 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 9th November 2023 be approved as a correct record.

In relation to the agenda item that had been considered on Banners, Bunting, Christmas Lights and Temporary Signage, the Scrutiny Manager reported that the aim was to bring this back to a future meeting of the committee by the summer.

26 Public Question Time

There were none.

27 Member Question Time

There were none.

28 Delivering the Shropshire Council Climate Change Action Plan

The committee received the report of the Climate Change Task Force Leader which summarised Shropshire Council's climate change strategy, recent carbon performance, the work of the Climate Task Force and identified potential future work priorities.

Adrian Cooper (Climate Change Task Force Leader) introduced the Task Force Team to the committee. In attendance was Sam Kirby-Bray (Climate and Carbon Support Officer), Oliver Rowe (Climate and Carbon Project Officer), Simon Stallard (Climate and Carbon Project Officer) and Dan Wrench (Climate and Carbon Project Officer).

Also in attendance was the Executive Director Place and the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Climate Change, Environment and Transport.

The Climate Change Task Force Leader took the committee through the report and explained that the Task Force Team was not the only team involved in climate change related activity within the Council. Other examples of colleagues involved in this work could be found in the Council's Affordable Warmth Team, Highways, Transport, Facilities Management and Estates.

In responding to questions, committee discussion and comments covered:

- Regarding the modelling methodology for measuring carbon emissions, this was an area of work that was still changing with various different approaches regarding how it should be measured.
- The importance of procurement in helping to accurately quantify and help suppliers to reduce indirect carbon emissions, which now account for around 93% of the Council's corporate carbon footprint, was emphasised.
- The need for the business community who although invited, had not yet attended Stakeholder Board meetings was commented on and it was noted that the Executive Director Place would mention this at the Shropshire Economic Partnership Forum.
- Based on this year's monitoring data to date, it was noted that the Council was not currently on track to meet the target of achieving net-zero carbon performance by 2030. However, the final data would not be available until the late spring and once known, would be reported to all members. It was noted

that whilst there were a lot of projects and interventions currently being worked on, the reductions in the emissions would not be seen immediately.

- The commissioning of a Climate Change Adaptation Strategy would involve working jointly with other public sector service delivery organisations and infrastructure providers, such as hospital trusts and integrated care systems.
- Examples of Shropshire Council providing grants for a number of business support initiatives within Shropshire such as Cool Shropshire and the Big Solar Co-op was referenced and various work / projects that was being undertaking with both farmers and Harper Adams was discussed.
- Figures relating to the exporting of renewable energy would be looked into and shared with the committee. It was noted that Shropshire was the fifth largest producer of solar energy in the UK and there was a lot of potential as yet unmet in the UK. However, the biggest constraint would be the local grid architecture.
- Clarification was sought regarding planning and policy regarding solar planning applications and where food security fitted into this, given that Shropshire was an agricultural county and in responding, the Climate Change Task Force Leader explained that there was an opportunity to generate more energy without significantly impacting on food production at all.
- The Climate and Carbon Project Officer explained that they were currently writing a bid for the Marches LEP Fund to start a trial on the use of biochar under poultry litter, which would go some way to reducing ammonia emissions.
- There was a lot of development happening in the biotechnology sector and the Task Force Team were using local expertise from the Energy and Byproduct Research Institute at Aston University.
- The Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder commented that the Task Force Team were leading the way with the projects that they engaged in and consequently, they were being approached by other local authorities for advice. He highlighted the excellent relationship between Keele University and the work of the Marches Forward Group with regard to its potential going forward.
- Further information regarding retrofitting was sought and it was explained that qualifying criteria was in place for people benefiting from the grant funding, with a lot of emphasis placed on the energy efficiency performance of the building. The scheme was delivered by the Marches Energy Agency, working with others.
- The Climate Change Task Force Leader confirmed that the climate appraisal section of the reports to Cabinet and Council were screened by himself and it was only rarely that there were reports where the climate agenda has no bearing.
- Regarding the Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4), the government has rewritten the guidance on LTPs and how they should be written to put carbon performance front and centre.
- With regard to revenue generation, as the team had been able to bring in a substantial amount of grant money, this meant that they had covered their costs in four years. Projects that they were involved were also revenue generated and would result in both a financial and carbon benefit to the Council.

- With regard to electric cars and the progress the Council is making with installing electric car charging points, the Council was not being offered grant to establish rapid chargers. In addition, there has been a certain amount of investment from the private sector in this, particularly around supermarkets.
- Shropshire Council has approximately 200 fleet vehicles with 15 of them being electric vehicles and 25 of them being hybrids. As the vehicles get to the end of their contracts, the current plan was to transfer them over to electric vehicles. However, this will not be possible with all of the vehicles due to the long and hillier rural routes within Shropshire. Therefore, green hydrogen was currently being considered.
- The technology was changing very quickly, particularly battery and hydrogen technology.

In concluding this item, the Chairman thanked the Climate Change Task Force Leader and his team for the excellent report and interesting discussion.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

29 Draft Terms of Reference for the Standing Climate Change and Environment Task and Finish Group

The Chairman asked if the committee had any comments or questions on the draft terms of reference for the Standing Climate Change and Environment Task and Finish Group and an observation was made that there were a lot of objectives, although it was noted that it would be an ongoing Task and Finish Group with no set end date that would meet as required by the group members.

Concern was expressed regarding the demand on time that would potentially be placed on the Task Force Team and comments were made that other teams within the Council and other bodies outside of the Council should also be involved in the work of the Task and Finish Group too. It was suggested that one of the meetings could be a joint meeting of the Stakeholder Board and The Task and Finish Group.

Clarification was sought regarding what was meant by the objective 'to identify learning from other areas that could help in Shropshire'. The Scrutiny Manager commented that this involved looking at benchmarking to identify recommendations that could be brought back to Shropshire.

The Climate Change Task Force Leader explained that a lot of engagement took place with other local authorities and in the setting up of this Task and Finish Group, he was keen to engage other Officers within the Council as well as engaging with external bodies. Possible items that he suggested might be worthy of consideration were the integration of carbon reporting as a normal part of business, supply chain emissions, adaptation and resilience and engaging the wider community.

30 Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

The Scrutiny Manager explained that all Committee Members should have received invitations to the work programming sessions in March and it was hoped that Directors, Assistant Directors and Portfolio Holders would be in attendance. Regarding the Standing Climate Change and Environment Task and Finish Group, this would continue into the next year, as would the other current Task and Finish Groups that were currently ongoing.

It was noted that one piece of work still outstanding was developing the terms of reference for a Task and Finish Group looking at transport.

The Scrutiny Manager reiterated that the Standing Climate Change and Environment Task and Finish Group would not be time limited for the year, rather it would run through the year and report back to the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee at regular points.

31 Date/Time of Next Meeting of the Committee

It was noted that the next meeting of the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee was scheduled to be held on Tuesday, 23rd April 2024 commencing at 2.00 p.m.

In closing the meeting, the Chairman also reminded everyone that they would shortly be receiving an email confirming the date of the Call In meeting once finalised.

Signed (Chairman)

Date: