



Committee and Date

Council  
7 July 2022

Item

Public

**Climate and Ecology Bill  
Final report of the Climate and Ecology Bill task and finish group**

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## **1. Synopsis**

This paper presents the conclusions of the Climate and Ecology Bill task and finish group.

## **2. Executive Summary**

- 2.1 On 25 February 2021 Council debated a motion that called on Council to "Support the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill". At the meeting, Council resolved to support an amendment to the motion to: "Refer this matter to a Task & Finish Group to look at the Climate & Ecological Emergency Bill in detail and to make recommendations on Shropshire Council's response to the Bill." The Performance Management Scrutiny Committee agreed to set up a single-meeting task and finish group, which met on 10 February 2022.
- 2.2 The group broadly supported the aims of the Bill. The officers who attended the meeting explained how Shropshire Council already meets or is working to the aims of the Bill. The group, however, was strongly divided on a key component of the Bill, which is to set up an independent, representative panel of UK citizens to help develop the emerging strategy. The group did not come to any agreement on how to proceed, so took a vote on a motion to support the Bill outright. This was not carried. The group then voted on a motion to support the bill without the clause to set up a citizens panel. This was carried.
- 2.3 The Performance Management Scrutiny Committee then agreed to endorse the findings of the task and finish group at its meeting on 4 May 2022. Shortly after this, the chair of the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee took the draft letter to Cabinet on 8 June 2022. Cabinet agreed that the draft letter should be

considered by Council, so that Shropshire Council could provide a single response to the bill.

### **3. Recommendations**

- 3.1 That Shropshire Council writes to the sponsors of the Climate and Ecology Bill, to express its broad support for the Bill, but to not support the requirement to set up a national citizens panel.

## **REPORT**

### **4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal**

- 4.1. The letter to Zero Hour Shropshire provides Shropshire Council with an opportunity to express its broad support for the aims of the bill.
- 4.2. There are no direct risks foreseen from either agreeing or not agreeing to the letter to Zero Hour Shropshire. However, the Climate Change and Ecology Bill, if it becomes law, may place requirements on Shropshire Council through the Government's subsequent climate change strategy.

### **5. Financial Implications**

- 5.1. There are no direct financial implications from either agreeing or not agreeing to the letter to Zero Hour Shropshire. However, the Climate Change and Ecology Bill, if it becomes law, may place requirements on Shropshire Council through the Government's subsequent climate change strategy.

### **6. Climate Change Appraisal**

- 6.1. There are no direct climate change implications from either agreeing or not agreeing to the letter to Zero Hour Shropshire. However, the Climate Change and Ecology Bill, if it becomes law, may place requirements on Shropshire Council through the Government's subsequent climate change strategy.

### **7. Background**

- 7.1 On 25 February 2021 Council debated a motion that called on Council to "Support the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill".
- 7.2 At the meeting, Council resolved to support an amendment to the motion to: "Refer this matter to a Task & Finish Group to look at the

Climate & Ecological Emergency Bill in detail and to make recommendations on Shropshire Council’s response to the Bill.”

7.3 The Performance Management Scrutiny Committee agreed to set up a single-meeting task and finish group, which met on 10 February 2022.

7.4 **The Climate and Ecology Bill**

The (then called) Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill was a private members bill that was brought to parliament by Caroline Lucas MP in the 2019-2021 parliamentary session. Its progress through the House of Commons has been delayed and a planned second reading did not appear to take place.

The bill has since reappeared as a private members’ bill in the House of Lords, where it is due to receive its second hearing on 15 July 2022.

7.5 **Discussions and conclusions of the task and finish group**

The group broadly supported the aims of the Bill. The officers who attended the meeting explained how Shropshire Council already meets or is working to the aims of the Bill. A table showing this is attached as Appendix 1.

7.6 The group, however, was strongly divided on a key component of the Bill, which is to set up an independent, representative panel of UK citizens to help develop the emerging strategy.

7.7 Some members of the group made a case for either a Shropshire local authority area citizens’ panel, or a regional panel covering the Marches area. They suggested that such a panel would not only provide an impetus to climate change mitigation and reduction initiatives but would also enhance the Council’s reputation as an organisation that took climate change concerns seriously. The officers attending the meeting agreed that a local citizens panel to look at broader environmental matters could be useful, but care would have to be taken to ensure it encompassed a broad range of views. It was also pointed out that a similar panel already existed, namely the Shropshire Climate Action Partnership.

7.8 The group then discussed the merits of a national citizens panel. Some members of the group were enthusiastic about this idea and argued that it could provide a powerful way to ensure that progress to implement the aims of the Bill did not drift or delay. Other members disagreed, and argued that such a panel might distract from the broader aims of the Bill, as well as making the Bill less palatable to some members of parliament who would eventually vote on the Bill.

- 7.9 The group did not come to any agreement on how to proceed, so took a vote on a motion to support the Bill outright. This was not carried. The group then voted on a motion to support the bill without the clause to set up a citizens panel. This was carried.
- 7.6 The group therefore recommended that the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee writes to the sponsors of the Climate and Ecology Bill on behalf of Shropshire Council, to express its broad support for the Bill, but to not support the requirement to set up a national citizens panel.
- 7.7 The Performance Management Scrutiny Committee then agreed to endorse the findings of the task and finish group at its meeting on 4 May 2022. Shortly after this, the chair of the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee took the draft letter to Cabinet on 8 June 2022. Cabinet agreed that the draft letter should be considered by Council, so that Shropshire Council could provide a corporate response to the bill.

**List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)**

Climate and Ecology Bill 2021

**Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)**

Ian Nellins

**Local Member**

All

**Appendices**

Draft letter to Zero Hour Shropshire

Climate and Ecology Bill 2022

## Appendix 1: Draft letter to Zero Hour Shropshire

Date: 25 April 2022

My Ref:

Your Ref

Dear Dr Russell,

### **Climate and Ecology Bill**

As you are aware, on 25 February 2021 Council debated a motion that called on Council to support the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill. At the meeting, Council resolved to support an amendment to the motion to refer this matter to a Task & Finish Group to look at in detail and to make recommendations on Shropshire Council's response.

The Climate and Ecology Bill Task and Finish Group met on 10 February 2022 and broadly supported the aims of the Bill. However, the Group was strongly divided on one of its key components, the setting up an independent, representative panel of UK citizens to help develop the emerging strategy. Whilst some members of the group were enthusiastic and argued that it could provide a powerful way to ensure that progress to implement the aims of the Bill did not drift or delay, other members disagreed, and argued that such a panel might distract from the broader aims of the Bill, as well as making the Bill less palatable to some members of parliament who would eventually vote on the Bill.

A motion to support the Bill outright was not carried and the group therefore recommended that the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee should write to Zero Hour, as the sponsors of the Climate and Ecology Bill, on behalf of Shropshire Council, to express its broad support for the Bill, but to advise that Shropshire Council does not support the requirement to set up a national citizens panel. Shropshire Council's Performance Management Scrutiny Committee met on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2022 and agreed this recommendation.

Kind Regards

Claire Wild  
Chair of Performance Management Scrutiny

