

Terms of Reference – Task and Finish Group on Climate Change and the Environment

Context

Following the report of the River Water Quality Task and Finish group to the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 9th November 2023, the committee confirmed that they would like to set up a standing Task and Finish group to look specifically at Climate Change and Environmental matters, this will include a continued focus on river water quality and pick up the committee's remit on flooding.

Objectives

- To have an ongoing focus on the progress in delivering the Council's Climate Action Plan working alongside the Climate Change and Carbon reduction Advisory Group, including work taking place to achieve the aim of Shropshire Council becoming carbon net-neutral by 2030.
- To develop an understanding of the impacts of climate change on wider issues including the health of the population and potential demand for services and support.
- To understand and take account of the relationship between climate change, Renewable Energy planning, and the Council objective of being net zero and energy self-efficient by 2030, as well as a direct role in supporting community energy projects.
- To maintain a focus on wider environmental matters in Shropshire including the improvement of water quality in rivers and water ways and Nature Recovery Plans
- To have a focus on flooding in the Shropshire Council area, including how the Council and partners are planning and adapting to, and preventing flooding.
- To identify learning from other areas that could help in Shropshire.
- To identify of good practice in Shropshire to be highlighted and shared.
- The identification of opportunities to achieve impacts outside of the direct remit of the Council.
- To ensure that there is a system-wide view across all partners and sectors in its considerations and investigations.
- To develop evidence-based conclusions on and recommendations on next steps that the Council could take forwards including informing how the Task and Finish group and Overview and Scrutiny can work with the current Board arrangement to maintain and strengthen the focus and delivery of climate change and carbon reduction actions.

Expected Impact of the task and finish group

- Providing critical friend challenge, including through holding to account on progress and impact

- Informing policy review and development
- Highlighting good practice and opportunities for improvement
- Reinforcing the interdependences and importance of system-wide identification and implementation of opportunities

Metrics/measurement demonstrating the effectiveness/impact of O&S involvement.

Carbon footprint impact data

TBD by the task and finish group and identified through their work

Methodology

- Desktop review and analysis of existing strategies, plans and data for Shropshire, including existing partnership working
- Benchmarking of data and the identification of best practice to compare how other places and organisations are tackling issues and identify potential opportunities for Shropshire.
- Asking questions of relevant local stakeholders, including through face-to-face meetings and virtual or physical site visits.
- Written questions to and meetings with relevant witnesses, as required for the work being completed.
- Convening and facilitating workshop sessions to explore topics and issues involving cross-sectoral organisations.

Information required

This will include:

- Report of the River Water Quality Task and Finish Group
- Annual Report 2023 **Shropshire Council Climate Strategy Progress Report 2022**
- Evidence of learning and progress from other authorities
- Examples of good practice within the organisation
- Work undertaken by the Shropshire Climate Action Partnership
- Power BI Climate dashboards and case studies from Shropshire Climate Action webpages

Witnesses expected to be heard from

This list is not exhaustive. Witnesses will vary depending on the scope and focus of the work

- Executive Director
- Assistant Directors

- Portfolio Holders
- Climate Change Team Manager
- Shropshire Climate Action Partnership
- Local stakeholders including River Severn Partnership, VCSE organisations and Marches Energy Agency
- Environment Agency
- Severn Trent Water
- Shropshire Highways
- Zero Carbon Shropshire
- Shropshire Council Passenger Transport
- Others – depending on focus e.g. NFU, T&PCs, and Local business groups

Timescales

This is a standing task and finish group. It will meet as required by the group members. Timing of the meetings can be informed by the delivery of actions, key decision points, or other events such as flooding.