



Committee and Date

Economy and Environment
Overview and Scrutiny Committee

25 January 2024

ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 9 November 2023

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

2.00 - 4.00 pm

Responsible Officer: Tim Ward Committee Officer

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Present

Councillors Joyce Barrow (Chairman), Steve Davenport (Vice Chairman), Garry Burchett, Rosemary Dartnall, Roger Evans, Nick Hignett, Pamela Moseley, Ed Potter, Rob Wilson and Paul Wynn

12 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Julian Dean.

13 Disclosable Interests

Councillor Roger Evans declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Items 7 and 8 as he was a member of Shropshire Rural Housing Association.

14 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 20th July 2023 be approved as a correct record.

15 Public Question Time

There were no public questions.

16 Member Question Time

There were no questions from Members.

17 River Water Quality Task and Finish Group

The committee received the report of the Scrutiny Manager which set out the report and recommendations of the River Water Quality Task and Finish Group following their investigation looking at pollution of waterways, focused on sewage, and options to reduce or stop this from occurring in Shropshire.

Councillor Kate Halliday, Chair of the River Water Quality Task and Finish Group, took the meeting through the report outlining the various meetings that had taken place. She stated that there were a number of issues but that the Group had decided to concentrate on sewage and that she hoped that the other issues could be looked at in the future. She suggested that a standing working group be set up to consider climate, flooding and other water issues.

The Assistant Director Economy & Place reminded the meeting that conditions could be attached to any planning permission to prevent any adverse effect of new developments on local watercourses and drainage.

The Executive Director of Place advised the meeting that the Council was working with Severn Trent and other agencies to ensure river quality and outlined some of the work that was taking place.

A Member asked for an update on the work of the River Severn Partnership which could be fed in to the new standing committee.

A Member asked what Cross border work was being carried out as there was pollution which came from outside Shropshire and asked that the Standing Committee look at this. The Executive Director of Place stated that a lot of work was being carried out and informed the meeting of a proposal to engage in a broad consultation exercise on water management on the whole of the River Severn from its source. He added that SC would be leading on environmental issues as part of Marches Forward Partnership.

A Member welcomed the recommendation especially around Grampian conditions. He commented that he was disappointed that there was no reference to other rivers in Shropshire which had similar problems. The Chair of the Task and Finish Group commented that the main problem was that there was a lack of data available for other rivers in Shropshire.

RESOLVED:

That Members:

1. Adopt the report of the Task and Finish Group.
2. Commission a standing Task and Finish Group that has the environment and climate change as its focus, as per the recommendation 9 in the Task and Finish Groups report.

18 **Response to the report and recommendations of the New Housing Developments Work**

The committee received the report of the Assistant Director Economy and Place which set out the proposed Housing Development Action Plan following the recommendations of the New Housing Development Task and Finish Group.

The Assistant Director Economy and Place reminded the meeting that the Task and Finish Group had arisen out of concerns of Members regarding poorly designed developments. She took the meeting though the work being done with regards to the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group.

A Member commented that there had been lots of complaints from Councillors around S38/278 agreements and expressed disappointment that progress with this was not better. The Assistant Director Economy and Place informed Members that the issue was being addressed but that it was difficult to recruit staff to cover this work which was currently being covered by agency staff.

A Member commented that residents often get hit with high fees from Management Companies that they were unaware of and that there was a need to raise awareness of this and of what the Council can and can't do. The Assistant Director Economy and Place stated that the Council has no control over whether Management Companies are engaged or what they do. Members asked whether the Council could lobby government about this.

A Member asked for regular updates on progress on S38 permits. The Assistant Director Economy and Place agreed that this could be done and that it would also be useful to get an officer to explain the process to members. The Chair asked that this be done by way of an online briefing rather than bringing an officer to a meeting.

RESOLVED:

That Members:

1. Agree the contents of the proposed action plan.
2. Request that the action plan is reported back to the committee in 12 months to review and monitor progress.

19 **Response to the report and recommendations of the Social Housing and the Housing Strategy Work**

The committee received the report of the Assistant Director Homes & Communities which set out the proposed Action Plan following the recommendations of the Housing Need and Social Housing Task and Finish Group.

The Assistant Director Homes & Communities took Members through the report, reminding them of the findings of the Task and Finish Group and updating them of action taken to date and further action that was being planned.

In response to a question around the role of private landlords, the Assistant Director Homes & Communities that the private landlord sector were a key part of the market and the relationship between the sector and the Council needed developing.

A Member asked whether the Council could become private landlord to help fill the gap. The Assistant Director Homes & Communities stated that the Council couldn't but that Cornovii could and were starting to do this as part of their development on London Road.

A Member commented that there were no timescales for completion of actions. The Assistant Director Homes & Communities stated that these would be added and that a revised action plan would be circulated.

A Member commented that it was important to locate appropriate housing near to employment as this was often a problem in recruiting people to positions. The Assistant Director Homes & Communities commented that Officers were aware of the problem and that often it was covered as part of planning process.

RESOLVED:

1. That committee notes the progress made towards delivering the recommendations agreed at Cabinet in September 2023.
2. That committee notes and provides feedback upon the action plan showing work undertaken and planned, and agrees to receive future updates on progress.

20 **Banners, Bunting, Christmas Lights and Temporary Signage**

The committee received the report of the Network Co-ordination and Compliance Manager which set progress made, and further action planned following the review of the Banners, Bunting, Christmas lighting & temporary signage policy.

Banners, Bunting and Christmas Lights

The Network Co-ordination and Compliance Manager reminded Members of the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group and asked that the committee to agree further work around this topic.

A discussion took place around the role of Parish and Town Councils.

RESOLVED:

1. That officers carry out a further engagement/consultation exercise, prior to Christmas 2023, with Town and Parish Councils to further identify "best practice", provision for specific retail centres, and any local conditions that could be included. This with a view for any subsequent revised policy/process to be implemented by April 2024.
2. That, taking account of consultation responses, a revised policy and process report for "Banners, Bunting and Christmas Illuminations" is drafted for consideration and further comment/feedback by the Committee.

3. Whilst Shropshire Council retain the legislative licencing function, that views are sought on possible devolvement of the administrative process to Town and Parish Councils outlining the model set by Shrewsbury Town Council as an example.
4. That officers gain feedback, via engagement/consultation, on a proposal for an annual licence that could be issued, on application and for specific applicants/locations.

Temporary Signage

The Network Co-ordination and Compliance Manager reminded Members of the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group. He advised that a review of the fee structure had found that a fee of £250 per application was being proposed for a 12 month period and a charge of £110 for a six month extension where required. This would cover the costs of administering the scheme and carrying out the necessary inspections. He added that it was proposed to amend the guidance to remove the requirement for signs to be within half a mile/two junctions of the Development.

A Member asked what was happening with historic signs. The Network Co-ordination and Compliance Manager stated that a review of the existing signs would take place and where required signs would be removed.

RESOLVED:

1. That Committee members approve the proposal to amend the current administration fee of £102.00 per application to £250.00 per application (further amended 'extension' fee increase proposal from current £97.00 to £110.00) to allow for a recovery of Officers time involved in carrying out 3 scheduled compliance inspections.
2. That Committee members approve the proposal to remove the current condition stating that signs can only be situated within half a mile/two junctions from the Development.
3. That a revised process and fee is implemented as soon as feasible and by April 1st, 2024, at the latest.

21 Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

The Scrutiny Manager presented the Economy and Environment's proposed work programme for the coming 12 to 24 months which had been informed by the committee's work programming sessions.

The Scrutiny Manager advised members that the Developer Contributor Task and Finish Group would be meeting shortly and that the Standing Task and Finish Group on Climate agreed earlier would also be meeting.

A discussion took place around whether scrutiny of the North West Relief Road and other projects should be included on the work programme and it was felt that at this stage they should not be included.

It was agreed that a Task and Finish Group to look at LTP4 should be established and that Members should receive a briefing prior to this being started.

RESOLVED:

That the work programme should be agreed subject to the addition of a Task and Finish Group to look at LTP4.

22 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 Thursday, 25th January 2024 commencing at 2.00 p.m.

Signed (Chairman)

Date: