

ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Environment Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday, 14 December 2021 at 6.00 pm in Telford Room, Addenbrooke House, Ironmasters Way, Telford, TF3 4NT

Present: Councillors M Boylan, V J Holt, T L B Janke, T J Nelson, G L Offland and G C W Reynolds (Chair).

Also Present: Councillor C Healy

In Attendance: F Mercer (Director: Communities, Customer & Commercial Services), R Phillips (Service Delivery Manager: Legal & Democracy), K Robinson (Senior Democracy Officer (Scrutiny))

ENVSC38 Declarations of Interest

None.

ENVSC39 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED that - the minutes of the meeting held on 6 October 2021 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

ENVSC40 Climate Change Action Plan Update

The Director: Communities, Customer and Commercial Services delivered an update presentation the Council's Climate Change Action Plan (the Plan).

A climate emergency was declared in July 2019 and the Authority aimed for carbon neutrality by 2030 with carbon emissions for the Borough at large to be net zero that same year. In the summer of 2020, the boroughwide Climate Partnership had been established and since the Plan had originally been presented to Cabinet in February 2020, there had been two updates to Cabinet (in March and November 2021).

In terms of emissions, there had been sustained downward progress from the 2018-2019 baseline year. In the two years to the meeting, there had been a 58% reduction in emissions. There was still progress to be made but it was thought positive that sustainable progress had been made during the Covid-19 pandemic.

A number of actions that had been delivered were noted:

- Retrofitting – eleven retrofit schemes had been completed, a further three were in progress, and two schemes were at the funding

application stage. These schemes were 60% grant funded with the Authority only contributing 40% of the capital.

- LED Lighting – since 2016, 99.3% of streetlights had been converted to LED, car park lights had been converted in 2020, funding had been approved for solar and LED light schemes in the Town Park.
- IT – there had been a rollout of more efficient laptops and a new datacentre had been built with natural cooling systems.
- Transport – the Authority had purchased six electric vans, a further seven were on order for a range of departments. Two electric minibuses had been ordered for the Arthog Outdoor Education Centre. Two e-bikes had been ordered for enforcement officers.
- Dual aperture recycling bins – the initiative, recommended by the Committee, was being piloted in the Town Park.

The Authority had undertaken a number of community projects. Schemes noted included the Climate Change Fund, the Trees and Seeds for Telford and Wrekin programme, the Ocean Fish Trail initiative, and a Carbon Watcher pilot programme that was being set up.

Telford & Wrekin Council had been involved in a series of partnership programmes; helping to establish the Climate Change Partnership in the Borough, setting up the Plastic Free Taskforce, and working as part of the Integrated Care System with health organisations and Shropshire Council.

Members heard that the Authority had a number of upcoming projects as part of the Plan:

- In Newport, decarbonisation work was being undertaken at the swimming pool with grant funding to install an air source heat pump, improve insulation, and to lessen the depth of the pool. It was anticipated that these works would result in a saving of 115 tonnes of Co2e per annum.
- The NuPlace development at Southwater Way was the most sustainable NuPlace project to date, the first tenants would be moving into their properties in February 2022 and all properties at the development were reserved. The Council had received feedback on the development and noted that the sustainable features had been appealing.
- In terms of other Council owned housing stock, the Authority was undertaking surveys with a view to retrofit accommodation to be more climate friendly. The Council wanted to lead by example and reduce costs of living in properties.

- In November 2021, Cabinet had approved a new Climate Change Investment Fund. The £1m programme was expected to launch in April 2022 with investment opportunities from £5.

The Council was also organising engagement events such as a Youth Climate Summit for secondary age students that would take place in March 2022 and 'Spring into St Georges', a village green event focussed on sustainability that would be held in April 2022.

Following the presentation, Members posed a number of questions:

In terms of carbon emission reduction, the downward trend appeared to be slowing, what would be the sticking point?

As you approached zero the trend would start to taper with projects that were more difficult. Heat, for example, was a particularly difficult area, while electricity was relatively easy.

Was the Telford Switch initiative still running?

It was.

Were the electric minibuses on order able to tow?

Officers were unable to provide an answer at the meeting; however, the Arthog had set their own specification so it was thought that they would be able to.

The Carbon Watchers programme was promising, were there plans for a professional equivalent to assist businesses and other organisation in the identification of their carbon footprint and decarbonisation needs?

For the Carbon Watchers programme, an online tool was being assessed, though a number of online tools existed. There was no single way to measure carbon footprints. There was work to be done to make carbon assessments more accessible.

Was the Newport swimming pool air source heat pump based heating backed up by another heat source?

This information was not to hand and officers would have to report on the matter.

How many Council buildings were still to undergo retrofitting? Which buildings were they? And when would they be completed?

This information was not available to hand and officers would respond in writing.

Had the Council consulted parish and town councils on greening proposals?

There was a group of councils that met to discuss environmental matters and the Council could discuss a number of issues raised by the Committee with those councils.

While there was a push to plant trees, and many members of the public were actively engaged with this, what work was done to encourage people to take ownership of the trees and to look after them?

The Council offered advice on where to plant trees so that they were in the right place. Where organisations had been given trees by the Authority, they planted those trees on their own land so they were responsible for their care. It was acknowledged that on large planting schemes, there could be an issue with overplanting and that messaging may be needed on the appropriateness of thinning out as those trees grew.

Members agreed that there was a leadership opportunity for the Council in terms of carbon footprint analysis and noted that parish and town councils in particular may benefit from a Council led programme.

The Committee was keen for there to be ongoing engagement activities around environmental issues most notably with young people. It was suggested that a hackathon style event could be used to engage young people in the building of a youth oriented environmental credit application.

ENVSC41 Chair's Update

None.

The meeting ended at 7.25 pm

Chairman:

Date: Date Not Specified