

ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Environment Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday 30 April 2025 at 6.00 pm in Council Chamber, Third Floor, Southwater One, Telford, TF3 4JG

Present: Councillors M Boylan (Chair), G H Cook, T L B Janke, L Lewis, H Morgan and P Thomas

Also Present: Councillor C Healy (Cabinet Member: Neighbourhoods, Planning & Sustainability)

In Attendance: E Cantillion (Co-Director, Shropshire Good Food Partnership), E Harvey (Lead Lawyer: Property & Commercial), K Kynaston (Director: Housing, Commercial & Customer Services), P Starkey (Senior Democracy Officer (Scrutiny)) and I Wykes (Climate Change & Sustainability Team Leader)

Apologies: Councillors H Rhodes and T J Nelson

ENVSC50 Declarations of Interest

None.

ENVSC51 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 12 February 2025 be agreed and signed by the Chair.

ENVSC52 Climate Change Adaptation Update

The Climate Change & Sustainability Team Leader presented an update to the Committee on the work undertaken by the Council in relation to Climate Change Adaptation.

In 2019, the Council declared a Climate Emergency and set out an ambitious target to ensure its activities and operations were carbon neutral by 2030. At the time of the meeting, the Council had achieved a 60% reduction in emissions since 2018/19 through mitigation strategies.

The report provided a summary of the Council's focused efforts on both mitigation and adaptation and the need for an adaptation plan following an increase in the frequency of extreme weather events. Members heard that the development of an adaptation plan had ensured business continuity, particularly during emergencies and demonstrated a proactive approach taken by the Council to manage future climate risks. A graph presented to the Committee during the meeting showed a rise in average temperatures since the pre-industrial era, with the hottest years occurring since the 1990s. A

further graph illustrated an increase in rainfall intensity and extreme weather events.

Since presenting the last update to Committee in March 2024, the Council had been working on the development of a climate change risk register and the implementation of several new adaptation measures. Members heard that many of the Council's mitigation efforts were already supporting adaptation such as the Council's housing scheme Nuplace which had continued to promote climate resilience through low-carbon housing design with the installation of solar panels, electric vehicle (EV) charging points and high insulation standards.

The Council had also implemented a Climate Change Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to encourage best design practices to reduce overheating in buildings. The Council's Tree Policy had continued to promote biodiversity through the planting of native and non-native species and the Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDs) handbook had helped manage surface water runoff and reduce flood risks.

Members also heard how strategic planning policies had supported adaptation. The Council's Local Plan outlined how developments should reduce water demand, manage flood risk, incorporate sustainable drainage and ensure resilience in public spaces. Developers would be required to submit sustainability statements demonstrating how projects contributed to climate change objectives including net zero targets.

The report highlighted how community engagement had been a key focus. The Annual Climate Change Borough Partnership Conference was held in October 2024 to raise awareness and encourage local organisations to consider adaptation strategies. The current Council Plan also emphasised building community resilience, with support provided through local flood groups, Councillor's pride funding for adaptation projects and signposting to funding sources such as Reaching Communities England.

Looking ahead, Members were informed that the Council had planned to keep the Climate Change Risk register under regular review, with an updated version expected to be presented to Cabinet in October 2025. The update would form part of a broader report of the Council's progress towards reducing emissions. Additionally, the Council would also be exploring how to integrate climate adaptation into its business continuity planning.

In response to questions raised during the meeting, the Climate Change & Sustainability Team Leader confirmed that the Council was well ahead of the curve in respect of climate change adaptation and mitigation and that the proactive approach, including the development of a comprehensive Climate Change Risk Register, integration of sustainability into planning policies, and community engagement initiatives had placed the Council amongst leading local authorities in this area.

The Climate Change & Sustainability Team Leader also advised Members that the Council had a flood plan in place and had already identified and

mapped out areas which were most at risk. It was noted that in order to effectively tackle issues around flooding, the Council would need to continue working closely with national agencies and other stakeholders to share responsibility to manage and reduce flood risks. Whilst the Council had a role in mitigation and resource allocation, long-term solutions would require coordinated efforts across multiple levels.

The Cabinet Member: Neighbourhoods, Planning & Sustainability stated that at the time of the meeting, the Government had also recently announced national funding to help the Severn Trent Drainage Board to address key drainage issues. The Council had promoted the use of sustainable drainage systems to manage water on-site in a more controlled and environmentally friendly manner. Whilst some systems had been seen as unattractive, the Council had continued to work to create spaces that were both functional and aesthetically pleasing such as pond areas.

In response to a question raised around processes for testing and reviewing business continuity plans, the Climate Change & Sustainability Team Leader advised that business continuity plans were not only about identifying why floods had occurred but were also in place to ensure that critical services could continue to operate despite the disruption. There had been a significant overlap between the emergency response process and business continuity, and it was noted that the continuity framework had remained active and relevant. The Council had conducted several drills and simulations as part of the testing process and whilst many were not specifically focused on climate change, they did address scenarios which would have been exacerbated as a result of climate change.

The Cabinet Member: Neighbourhoods, Planning & Sustainability commented how in places such as Ironbridge, the response system had become a well-oiled machine out of necessity and that, that model had been later adopted in other parts of the Borough. The same approach had also been applied to trees following a significant number of trees coming down during storms. Although all trees had been surveyed and assessed by the Council, trees which were healthy were brought down as a result of the weather, highlighting how difficult it had been to predict outcomes and the balance between managing risk and preserving the environment.

ENVSC53 Shropshire Good Food Partnership

The Committee received an update from the Co-Director of the Shropshire Good Food Partnership.

The presentation set out the work of the Partnership over the last 12 months, which highlighted an increase in engagement from partner organisations and the local community. The Partnership had remained project-funded and had continued to seek core financial support.

The Partnership had expanded into the Marches Food Network, engaging stakeholders at multiple levels and embedding resilience planning into their

strategies, focusing on infrastructure, market access, branding and support from producers. The Partnership had been supported by initiatives such as Food Loops Planning and funding bids to the UK Lottery. These efforts had been aimed at driving system change, supporting cooperative development and localising food networks.

The Partnership had strengthened multi-level stakeholder engagement, working with farmers, local councils, training centres and national networks. It had supported farmer clusters, delivering grassroots training and hosting webinars, talks and field sessions. The Partnership had also contributed to national Sustainable Food Places (SFP) working groups and this collaborative approach had helped fostered strong relationships with partners and communities across the region.

A major focus for the Partnership had been placed on schools, with a £100,000 project launched to support food education and sustainability. The Partnership had at the time of the meeting engaged with 20 primary schools and 10 partner organisations through the School Food Web project. Activities had included food audits, tailored sustainability roadmaps, CPD events and Citizen Science Projects which had helped to empower pupils to explore the nutritional value of food and its environmental impact. Ten schools had participated in nutritional monitoring, comparing supermarket produce with freshly grown alternatives. Hollinswood Primary School had taken part in a pilot for surplus food initiatives which included cookery clubs and partnerships with local food hubs. Composting efforts had been scaled up, with 16 schools receiving grants and hot bin composters to become food-waste free. Members heard that the Smoothie Bike initiative alone had saved 250kg of frozen fruit waste and six schools had also joined the Let's Go Zero programme, committing to achieve net zero by 2030.

The Partnership had continued to actively engage the public through storytelling, newsletters, blogs, press, and events. The Good Food Movement continued to grow, with over 350 members and partners. Seasonal learning circles and webinars had provided platforms for dialogue on food quality, sustainability and local food systems. These efforts had helped raise the visibility of the Partnership's work both locally and nationally, with other regions reaching out to learn from their approach.

In response to questions raised during the meeting, the Co-Director advised that the Partnership were exploring a new petition to Government to request farming to be formally included in the national curriculum. One of the key challenges for the Partnership had been around supporting teaching staff with the resources and time they need to embed food education into lesson plans.

The Cabinet Member: Neighbourhoods, Planning & Sustainability stated that there had been a noticeable increase in demand for allotment spaces across the Borough and in response to this, a number of new allotment sites had been established, particularly within more recent housing developments. The Council had also worked to ensure that allotments were included in planning

policies, helping to embed access to growing spaces as a standard part of community infrastructure moving forward.

The Co-Director commented that the Partnership had worked with a wide range of schools, including the Grove School, where an after-school club had been arranged for SEND students which focused on using surplus food and community kitchens. The aim of the activity was to create a hands-on, inclusive environment that supports both practical skills and confidence-building for children.

The Co-Director confirmed that the Partnership had worked with a mix of schools across Shropshire. Whilst there had been high levels of engagement at primary level, the Partnership had faced challenges with secondary schools. At the time of the meeting, the Partnership had piloted a canteen-style initiative using school kitchen spaces as community kitchens. Pupils had been actively involved in planning and delivering events, which catered for 67 family members using surplus food.

ENVSC54 Work Programme Review

ENVSC55 Chair's Update

The Chair indicated that this was the last meeting of the Committee for the 2024/25 municipal year and thanked Members for their contributions, particularly their recent involvement in the Green Pledge workshop.

The Chair reminded Members to put forward items for consideration for the next work programme.

The meeting ended at 7.08 pm

Chairman:

Date: Wednesday 2 July 2025