

ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Environment Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday, 6 October 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 and G C W Reynolds (Chair)

Also Present: Councillor D Wright (Cabinet Member for Economy, Housing, Transport & Infrastructure)

In Attendance: A Brookes (Service Delivery Manager - Highways, Engineering & Project Delivery, Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services), L Gordon (Democracy Officer (Scrutiny)), A Lowe (Associate Director: Policy & Governance), and D Sargeant (Director: Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services)

Apologies: Councillors G L Offland

ENVSC33 Declarations of Interest

None

ENVSC34 Minutes of The Previous Meeting

RESOLVED that - the minutes of the meeting held on 21 July 2021 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

ENVSC35 Terms of Reference

The Chair outlined that the Terms of Reference remained unchanged from the previous year with one minor change suggested to provide clarity around the process for appointment of a Chair for the Committee.

RESOLVED that – the terms of reference be approved.

ENVSC36 Flood Water Management Review

Members received the presentation of the Service Delivery Manager: Highways, Engineering and Project Delivery and the Drainage and Flood Risk Team Leader.

Members heard that in its role as a Highway Authority, the Council was responsible for managing drainage and flood risk as part of its strategic and regulatory role. This meant mitigating the risk of increasingly severe weather due to climate change. Throughout 2020, there had been a number of severe flood events, including the worst floods on the River Severn since 2000. This was followed by Storm Dennis in February 2020, heavy rainfall in the north of

the Borough during August 2020 that resulted in impacts not experienced since 2007. In January 2021, river levels again reached levels similar to those in February 2020. The Committee were informed that the Council had provided continued support for those affected while working to secure government funding to assist in recovery and flood prevention measures.

Through work with partner agencies and communities, they were able to gain greater understanding of the effects of events, both before and after. The Coalbrookdale Flood Action Group had been an indicator of the importance of community support as it had allowed all partners to talk to the community directly and develop flood responses. The Committee heard that when the flood barriers moved in February 2020 work and investment was carried out in partnership with the Environment Agency. A bid had also been submitted for £50,000 worth of Property Flood Resilience Grants.

Feedback provided in the aftermath of the January 2021 floods showed that 92% of respondents felt supported by the Council at all stages of the flooding incident. The Council continued to be an active participant in the English Severn and Wye Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (RFCC), the newly formed River Severn Partnership and were working with partners on the 'Farm the flow' project in the Coal Brook catchment.

A discussion followed noting the improvements made surrounding the Severn which the Committee welcomed. However, Members noted that flooding and drainage issues within other areas of the Borough had not been addressed.

Members posed a number of questions:

How could roads flooding in urban areas be prevented, particularly on new build estates?

The Council had worked extensively with planning to supervise technical approvals and the 100-year+ climate change modelling to ensure that water was safely managed during development. Until completion of a development, the responsibility would fall with the developer but conditions had been put in place. However, most pipe networks were maintained by Severn Trent rather than highways.

What steps were taken to audit and monitor Severn Trent?

In order to manage risk the Service Delivery Manager Highways, Engineering & Project Delivery assured the Committee that they worked with both the Environment Agency and Severn Trent on all issues. This enabled them to learn from events and provide prioritised and targeted investment where needed. It was recognised that schemes needed to be sustainable and developers held to account in the long term.

To what extent had the Council improved the flooding outcomes across the Borough?

Members were advised that this was dependent on the area as different schemes were appropriate for different areas making it hard to quantify. Some areas benefited from improved warning systems and awareness whereas as others required more targeted intervention. In Arleston officers had worked with a developer on attenuation to take rainfall over the Wrekin, to protect the community downstream.

RESOLVED –

Members noted the positive steps outlined in the report and the impact of climate change is having on the frequency and severity of weather events, and the measures in place to support those effected.

ENVSC37 Chair's Update

The Chair informed Members that the recommendation on recycling bins had moved towards implementation, with one bin having been installed in place at the town park. More were to be rolled out in the near future.

The meeting ended at 6.55 pm

Chairman:

Date: Tuesday, 14 December 2021