

ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Environment Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday 22 November 2022 at 6.00 pm in The Telford Room, Addenbrooke House, Ironmasters Way, Telford, TF3 4NT

Present: Councillors G C W Latham-Reynolds (Chair),
T L B Janke, T J Nelson and G L Offland.

Also Present: Councillors C Healy (Cabinet Member: Climate Change, Green Spaces, Natural and Historic Environment and Cultural Services) and R A Overton (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member: Housing, Enforcement and Transport)

In Attendance: E Harvey (Lead Lawyer: Property & Commercial),
M Powell (Service Delivery Manager: Strategic Transport & Highway Network Management), K Robinson (Democracy Officer (Scrutiny)), I Wykes (Team Leader: Climate Change and Sustainability)

Apologies: Councillor M Boylan

ENVSC56 Declarations of Interest

None.

ENVSC57 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting 12 October 2022 be approved and signed by the Chair.

ENVSC58 Telford and Wrekin Council Becoming Carbon Neutral and Plastic Free Update

The Team Leader: Climate Change and Sustainability presented the report. The report covered the Council's progress on the Being Carbon Neutral and Plastic Free agendas.

The presentation outlined progress towards net zero since 2018/19 – the baseline year against which progress was measured. An outline of the way comparisons were made was provided, setting out the scopes and BEIS conversion factors. The Council used the Midlands Net Zero Hub to audit its net zero work

In terms of its own buildings, the Council was on a 100% green tariff for energy. Electric usage figures had been skewed by Covid-19, therefore, those years would not be counted. Despite this, there was still a general trend downwards in energy usage thanks to reduced building usage and the impact of solar panels.

The Committee received an update on the impact of works at Newport Leisure Centre. Refitting works, carried out with £586,000 of PSDF funding, had resulted in a saving of 566,863 kWh of gas and a 61% reduction in the Centre's carbon footprint. The savings generated by the works were also highlighted. Future works were planned for Oakengates and Wellington leisure centres.

Members were informed of the Council's planned next steps. The Action Plan was under review and the reduction and monitoring of emissions would continue. Work was to be carried out with service areas to develop adaptation plans and to extend the range of advice and support available to all staff on environmental matters.

Members expressed their support for the works at Newport Leisure Centre and the plans for further adaptation works whilst noting the need for the Council to promote its success and act as a leader and convenor for businesses in the Borough.

Members noted the Council's progress on becoming carbon neutral and plastic free.

ENVSC59 Active Travel & Electric Vehicles - Workstream Update

The Service Delivery Manager: Strategic Transport Highway Network Management presented the report.

Active Travel

Significant work had been undertaken on the Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan and the related strategies. The plan set out a ten-year vision for where the Council wanted to take the Borough's walking and cycling networks and had been considered by Cabinet in July 2022. It set out an £8m plan for improving both leisure and commuter routes, bringing the whole route up to standard. Work had been started on improvements to signage, crossing interfaces, street lighting, and CCTV amongst other works.

Other active travel projects included cycle stations, a new footway sweeper, and the Telford Bike Hub.

The Council had committed to a four-year investment in active travel in 2020. A Levelling Up bid for £20m had been submitted for works on the Silkin Way and the Authority was hoping for a decision on this bid in the near future.

Members noted the importance of encouraging active travel and moving away from reliance on personal vehicles as well as the importance of making active travel accessible for all.

A question was posed regarding the implications of an unsuccessful funding bid. Officers responded to state that plans would need to change if Levelling

Up funding was not secured; alternative funding would need to be found, however, with plans for the future already prepared the Council was well placed to bid for any future funding routes.

Electric Vehicles (EV)

The Council's EV strategy had been to Cabinet in July 2022; this was a data led strategy and covered issues such as potential adoption of charging points, levels of deprivation and a targeted plan for investment in charging in the Borough.

The presentation noted that there were 37 charging points in the Borough, although this was known to be closer to 45. In addition, there were around 800 home charging installations carried out through the EVHS schemes and 55 at businesses through the WCS scheme. Both of these schemes had either ended or evolved.

In total, there were 1,613 ultra-low emission vehicles in the Borough, the majority of which were company vehicles – 930 to 683 private vehicles. An uptick in the adoption of private EV charging points had been seen, especially rapid and ultra-fast charging points.

A funding bid to the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles was being finalised to bring 50 charge points to the Council's off street car parks. In addition to this, the Authority had commenced procurement of an EV chargepoint operator with a tender to be issued by the end of the year.

In terms of its own fleet, the Council had six EVs and had a year delay for the next six.

Following the presentation, Members posed a number of questions:

EVs still struggled in terms of mileage, were the Council's fleet operating as hoped?

The vans should run all day when fully charged. This would be investigated if there had been suggestions that they were not.

As the Council was aware of supply issues, were they looking ahead and ordering in advance?

Forecasting work would need to be undertaken.

Members noted the need accessibility to be considered when planning chargepoints. Members also noted the prohibitive cost of EVs for many and that changing technology may put many off.

Councillor T J Nelson entered the meeting after the item had started and was unable to take part in the debate and vote.

Councillor G L Offland left the meeting at 18:45. As only two Members able to vote remained, a vote on recommendations in the report was deferred to the next meeting of the Committee.

ENVSC60 Chair's Update

None.

The meeting ended at 7.27 pm

Chairman:

Date: Tuesday 28 February 2023