

## **ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

### **Minutes of a meeting of the Environment Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday 4 December 2024 at 6.00 pm in Council Chamber, Third Floor, Southwater One, Telford, TF3 4JG**

**Present:** Councillors M Boylan (Chair), H Rhodes (Vice-Chair), G H Cook, T L B Janke, L Lewis, T J Nelson and P Thomas.

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

**In Attendance:** E Harvey (Lead Lawyer: Property & Commercial), S Dunlop (Ecology and Green Infrastructure Specialist), J Dunn (Director: Prosperity & Investment), V Hulme (Development Management Service Delivery Manager), K Kynaston (Director: Housing, Customer Services & Commercial), I Wykes (Team Leader - Climate Change & Sustainability) and P Starkey (Senior Democracy Officer (Scrutiny))

**Apologies:** Councillor H Morgan

#### **ENVSC35 Declarations of Interest**

None.

#### **ENVSC36 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

**RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 9 October 2024 be agreed and signed by the Chair.**

#### **ENVSC37 Landfill Management in Telford and Wrekin**

The Director: Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services provided Members with a verbal update on Landfill Management in Telford and Wrekin. Members heard that a written report would be presented at the next formal meeting of the Environment Scrutiny Committee scheduled to take place in February 2025 and would outline the approach taken to manage landfill sites across the borough including testing and continued monitoring of sites.

Members heard that landfill sites were identified as one of the oldest common forms of waste disposal in the UK and that Telford & Wrekin Council were currently responsible for the management of landfill operations at three licensed sites including the operational Granville site located in Redhill as well as the Candle site located in Horsehay and the Stoney Hill site located in Lightmoor which were now closed and were no longer receiving waste.

The report due to be presented to Committee would also look to provide an overview of the contaminated land strategy, which was currently in the process of being refreshed.

Following the update, Members posed the following questions:-

*After speaking with the Environment Agency, I understand that the results of the recent sulphate tests conducted had not been shared. Could the Council confirm when these results would be made available?*

The Director: Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services confirmed that a series of testing for hydrogen sulphate had taken place and results of those tests would be shared with Members in the near future.

*There had been a number of complaints relating to potholes on Grange Lane by the Granville Landfill site in Redhill which had not been filled. I understand that the landfill operator had agreed to fill the potholes but had only completed a section of the road with the remaining section leading up to the works entrance untouched. As part of the planning application, was the operator responsible for restoring the road back to its original condition?*

The Development Manager Service Delivery Manager advised that as part of the conditions granted, the operator would need to comply and take responsibility for restoring the highway back to its original form.

*Who was responsible for older landfill sites in the Borough and what plans were in place to maintain them?*

The Director: Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services advised that he was not aware of any older landfill sites situated in the Borough but would provide a further update to committee on the Council's work to maintain current sites.

### **ENVSC38 Telford & Wrekin Council Becoming Carbon Neutral**

The Climate Change & Sustainability Team Leader presented the report to Committee which provided an update on the progress the Council has made over the last 12 months to meet its target of becoming Carbon Zero by 2030 and the additional work undertaken to reduce carbon emissions by 61% including the development of a corporate climate change risk register.

In 2019, the Council declared a Climate Emergency and set out an ambitious target to ensure its activities and operations are carbon neutral by 2030. The report highlighted ongoing improvements the Council has made to key buildings including further improvements to the Council's operational estate including the installation of energy efficiency measures.

Members heard that Oakengates Leisure Centre had received a £2.2m investment which saw the installation of a new air source heat pump and insulation, enabling the EPC rating to increase to B from a previous rating of C. Horsehay Village Gold Course has benefited from the installation of new

solar panels, battery storage and EV charging points resulting in an energy saving of 65MWh. The Council had also recently applied for a £1.1m grant for Wellington Leisure Centre to cover the cost of the installation an air source heat pump and further insulation.

The report highlighted how the Council had continued its investment into housing schemes such as NuPlace which had seen 30 homes built at the Donnington Wood site with EV charging points and a further 7 homes built to Future Homes standards to ensure the Council continues to provide properties that are more affordable to heat, tackling fuel poverty and health impacts of living in cold and damp conditions.

The Council has previously delivered a wide range of projects to support people in fuel poverty including 10 off gas properties retrofitted with 22 energy efficiency measures using funding from phase 1 of the Home Upgrade Grant (HUG1). A further 25 properties had been included in the application process for the next phase of the grant programme. The Local Authority Delivery Scheme (LAD2) scheme was also used to retrofit 50 homes in Sutton Hill with 77 energy efficiency measures, including external wall insulation, loft insulation, cavity wall insulation, double glazing and solar panels, reducing heating bills by £640 per year. Through its Warm and Well Telford grant, the Council had continued to provide partial glazing, external doors and heating controls for 50 eligible properties.

Members heard that the Quad located in the Station Quarter development was the first Council building to receive an EPC rating of A for environmental performance and B for energy with a further 189 affordable homes planned to be built.

Further funding had also been delivered into cycle routes as part of the Council's Active Travel Scheme and the Council had also recently introduced a new car club for staff to reduce business milage emissions. Delivery had started on new charging points across the Borough following a £1.2m investment for on street charging points and initiatives such as the Bike Hub had continued to support residents to make the switch from the use of their cars following the introduction of adapted bikes.

Over the last 12 months, the Council had continued to be proactive in protecting and enhancing council-owned green spaces to support climate adaptation with the introduction of 38 wildflower areas across 23 sites. The Council had worked closely with the Buglife charity to address the decline in pollinating insects and meadow cut areas were now incorporated into al Green Flag parks.

Members heard that the development of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) in partnership with Shropshire Council had been progressing and a steering group of nine members including the Environment Agency and Shropshire Wildlife Trust was now in place to provide support.

Following the presentation of the report, Members asked a series of questions:-

*Was the on-street charging referenced in the report announced by the Council and did the Council know what technology would be used?*

The Director: Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services advised that the off-street elements of the initiative had been announced previously and that the Council were currently working through the details to provide an update for on-street parking following allocation of funding for Local Authorities. Council teams were currently working through the criteria to determine where the funding could be used and its deliverability. Depending on the levels of funding provided, the Director: Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services advised that consultation would take place with ward members to identify the best locations, taking into consideration the current challenges with on-street parking in the Borough.

*Taking into consideration residents who may want to charge their vehicles in the public realm and given that this is not new technology with working examples in councils across the UK, how would the Council ensure flexibility to accommodate those residents who do not have driveways?*

The Director: Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services advised that the Council would take into consideration residents who may not have a driveway or off-street space for charging and that further work may be needed to offer bespoke solutions including designated parking bays to avoid cables being dragged across frontways.

*Were the heat pumps and wood chip pellet boilers the most energy efficient way of working?*

The Climate Change & Sustainability Team Leader advised that heat pumps had proven to be much more efficient and cheaper to use than gas. However, there had been a shortage of professionals who could install them and therefore many installations were being completed through traditional gas fitting methods. Members were informed that the main issue with heat pumps was that they were only effective if the insulation had been installed correctly, however there would be cases where heat pumps would be fitted in housing with new building regulations as a result of houses being designed to accommodate air source heat pumps.

### **ENVSC39 The Green Pledge**

The Ecology and Green Infrastructure Specialist provided Members with a verbal update on the work undertaken to establish a new biodiversity accreditation scheme known as the Green Pledge.

Following a brief provided by the Cabinet Member: Neighbourhoods, Planning & Sustainability in Spring 2024, the Council had produced two variations of the Green Pledge scheme and were now seeking feedback from the

Environment Scrutiny Committee on branding and recommendations for sites, projects, partnership organisations and applicant engagement.

Members heard that version one of the Green Pledge closely resembled existing projects that were already administered by the Council such as the Green Guarantee Scheme but with a focus on areas of privately owned public open space. The Pledge would look to follow similar criteria to the Green Guarantee Scheme by way of protecting land and would prevent landowners from changing the use of the land away from public open space without further consultation with the Council.

When considering a site suitable for Green Pledge accreditation, a number of criteria would need to be met including ownership, local support, ecological value and connectivity, green network recognition and recreation. Acceptance of sites into the scheme would also earmark them for additional protection in the future including local wildlife site status.

Members also heard that the Council's Green Network was in the process of being updated as part of the Local Plan which would help to identify suitable sites across the Borough. At the time of the meeting, the Council were current focusing on adoption of sites which were part of new and existing residential development but not owned by the Council such as the land around Lawley, Lightmoor and Ketley Millennium Village.

Version two of the Green Pledge Scheme was based on several internal and external projects delivered by the Council's Ecology Team including the Green Guarantee Scheme, the Potters Landfill Trust Scheme and the Severn Trent Grant Scheme and would have a bigger focus on business owners, enabling organisations to demonstrate their commitment to local biodiversity. To enable the Scheme to offer fair and equitable access without penalizing organisations for lack of land ownership, three categories had been created which landowners and/or organisations could apply for with each category having a tiered commitment system.

Members heard that the Green Space category would enable landowners and/or business owners to designate a portion of their land as protected green space for an allotted amount of time. Applicants would be encouraged to create a management plan for their open green space, either to maintain or enhance the condition and landowners could commit to one of three levels which would see land protected up to 30 years with no development or sale.

The second category of the Pledge referred to as Green Time would allow business owners to offer a set amount of volunteer hours per year. Volunteer hours could be spread between employees of an organisations and business owners could commit to one of three levels which would see up to 150 volunteer hours allocated across one year.

The final category of the Pledge referred to as Green Grant would enable business owners to offer a set donation based on business size to the

management and enhancement of protected sites or biodiversity projects in the Borough.

Members were advised that as version two of the Green Pledge Scheme focuses on multiple criteria by which organisations can access the award scheme, three levels of awards would also be available to apply for:-

- Bronze Green Pledge Award – organisations who sign up to any one of three criteria at any tier;
- Silver Green Pledge Award – organisations who sign up to any two of three criteria at any tier; and
- Gold Green Pledge Award – organisations who sign up to all three criteria or two criteria with at least one at the middle tier or above.

The Council's Ecology Team would be responsible for carrying out the assessment process and awarding the Green Pledge Scheme accreditation to landowners and/or business owners and applicants would receive both physical and digital marking tools to demonstrate their successful application to the scheme. An annual report would also be generated to summarise how landowners and/or business owners commitments had benefitted the Borough, local community and specific projects.

Following the presentation, Members posed the following questions:-

*Did the Green Pledge Scheme follow the same process as the Green Guarantee whereby land that had been protected by the Green Guarantee Scheme could only be disposed of following agreement by the Council's Cabinet?*

The Ecology and Green Infrastructure Specialist confirmed that the Green Guarantee Scheme is specific to land owned by the Council and that decisions on disposal of land protected by this scheme could not be made by Officers without full consultation with the Cabinet.

*I understand that the field located at Holy Trinity Academy was protected under the Green Guarantee Scheme but was not currently accessible to the public unless a fee was paid and the use of the field was booked?*

The Director: Prosperity & Investment advised that there was a community use agreement in place and that the school were required to make the use of the field available outside of school hours free of charge.

**RESOLVED – that a workshop be arranged to enable the Environment Scrutiny Committee to provide feedback into the development of the Green Pledge Scheme.**

#### **ENVSC40 Work Programme Review**

The Lead Lawyer: Property & Commercial presented the updated work programme to the Committee. The next two formal meetings were scheduled

to take place in February and April 2025 and would look at items on the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, Biodiversity Duty and Climate Change Adaptation.

**ENVSC41 Chair's Update**

The Chair provided an update on the formal report due to be presented to Committee at the next formal meeting on Landfill Management in Telford and Wrekin which would look to address concerns raised by residents.

The meeting ended at 7.10 pm

**Chairman:** .....

**Date:** Wednesday 12 February 2025