

ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Environment Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday 2 July 2025 at 6.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Third Floor, Southwater One, Telford, TF3 4JG

Present: Councillors M Boylan (Chair), H Morgan (Vice-Chair), S Handley, L Lewis, H Rhodes, T J Nelson and P Thomas.

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

In Attendance: J Dunn (Director: Prosperity & Investment), E Harvey (Lead Lawyer: Property & Commercial), A Preece (Ecology & Green Infrastructure Specialist) and P Starkey (Senior Democracy Officer (Scrutiny)).

Apologies for Absence: Councillor T L B Janke.

ENVSC1 Declarations of Interest

None.

ENVSC2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 30 April 2025 be agreed and signed by the Chair.

ENVSC3 Terms of Reference 2025/26

The Lead Lawyer: Property & Commercial presented the Environment Scrutiny Committee Terms of Reference for the 2025/26 municipal year. Members heard that each council Committee had been granted delegated authority to approve their own terms of reference at the Annual Council Meeting in May 2025.

It was noted that there were no proposed changes.

RESOLVED – that the Terms of Reference set out in Appendix A of the report be approved.

ENVSC4 Environment Scrutiny Work Programme 2025/26

The Lead Lawyer: Property & Commercial presented the draft Environment Scrutiny Committee Work Programme for the 2025/26 municipal year.

The proposed work programme spanned across a period of two years to offer flexibility to accommodate ad hoc items. The work programme featured several standing items including an annual update on the Council's climate change agenda. There were several new inclusions for the work programme such as the draft contaminated land strategy, a review of surface water flooding and a review of street waste.

Members highlighted the need to examine the current street waste arrangements, particularly the role of the Council's contractors and the Community Action Teams (CAT). Members discussed the possibility of a cross-cutting piece with the members of the Communities Scrutiny Committee.

The Senior Democracy Officer (Scrutiny) advised that a review of the work of CAT had already been included on the Communities Scrutiny work programme and would explore options with the Chair of the Committee for a cross-cutting piece.

Members also requested an update in relation to the Granville waste disposal site following the report presented to Committee earlier in the year. It was noted that although complaints had decreased, the public portal hosted by the Environment Agency had been closed, leaving residents without a further update on the management of the site. It was requested that the Council provide Members with a further update to help inform and support residents, expressing the need for both reassurance and continued monitoring. Concerns were also raised about the site's waste containment cells and the lifespan of the membrane lining and the possible impact on contaminating nearby water sources.

The Chair advised that comments raised by the Committee would be fed back to the appropriate Teams.

RESOLVED – that the work programme for 2025/26 be approved.

ENVSC5 Update on Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)

The Ecology and Green Infrastructure Specialist presented an update on the Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS).

Since the last update presented to the Committee in February 2025, Members heard that significant progress had been achieved across several key areas including drafting priorities and measures, assembling and finalising the publication draft and mapping measures for an online viewer.

The draft Strategy was presented to Natural England's multi-agency DEFRA pre-consultation panel on 6 June 2025 which provided expert input to assess the strategy's alignment with national expectations. Representatives of the LNRS Steering Group had used the panel meeting to seek endorsement of the draft strategy to public consultation and to obtain additional clarification on

subjective issues such as grouping of topics and/or measures and effective formatting.

Officers explained that the formal written response from Natural England received on 17 June 2025 outlined several technical recommendations to strengthen the draft strategy. The response also acknowledged the quality of work that had been put into the draft strategy to date including stakeholder engagement and collaboration, however the suggested timeframe to reach public consultation was seen as unrealistic.

Given the significant importance of the agricultural sector in delivering the LNRS, Officers explained that opportunities to engage with the farming community had been carefully considered and in particular two major agricultural shows at Burwarton and Minsterley were identified as valuable platforms for promoting the public consultation. In anticipation of these events, Officers had undertaken work to produce a revised draft strategy which incorporated recommendations provided by the pre-consultation panel. The updated draft was finalised on 20 June 2025 and would be available for approval by informal Cabinet for both Telford & Wrekin and Shropshire Council in July before the public consultation period starts, running from August to mid-October 2025.

Members heard that the final strategy was expected to be completed by December 2025, followed by a statutory 28-day consultation period before formal adoption in early 2026. The LNRS would be subject to a review every 3–10 years, as determined by Government.

In response to questions raised about the inclusion of a species register and the impact of housing development proposals for farmland, the Ecology and Green Infrastructure Specialist explained that a species register was in development by the Council, however there were continued challenges when tracking species due to climate change and reliance on volunteer recorders. Officers emphasised the importance of local plans to manage infrastructure and avoid uncontrolled development, however while housing was necessary, policies such as a 10% biodiversity net gain and an urban green factor had been designed to mitigate environmental impact.

Following questions raised about the effectiveness and design of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), the Ecology and Green Infrastructure Specialist advised that SuDS were designed to manage sustainable drainage and also support biodiversity. The LNRS would aim to rebuild ecological networks to allow species to recolonise.

Members discussed the use of SuDS to incorporate permanent pond areas to support species, however raised concerns around SuDS which were designed for rare weather events and may no longer be adequate due to climate change and asked Officers to consider better water retention methods. The Director: Prosperity & Investment explained that SuDS had been designed for climate change allowances including additional capacity for extreme weather events and that future policy would consider both wet and dry systems to improve resilience and support biodiversity.

Members thanked Officers for their work in producing the draft LNRS and noted that the feedback received so far had been positive. Members asked if details of the consultation period could be shared with the Committee for further input and that once the public consultation period had concluded that the draft Strategy be brought back to Committee for review.

ENVSC6 Chair's Update

The meeting ended at 6.50 pm

Chairman:

Date: Wednesday 22 October 2025