

ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Environment Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday 4 March 2026 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, T L B Janke, L Lewis, T J Nelson and P Thomas.

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

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

Apologies: Councillor H Rhodes.

ENVSC12 Declarations of Interest

None.

ENVSC13 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 22 October 2025 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

ENVSC14 Telford & Wrekin Becoming Carbon Neutral and Climate Change Adaptation - Update Report

The Team Leader: Climate Change & Sustainability presented an update on climate change adaptation and carbon reduction, outlining the progress made against the Council's carbon neutral commitments.

Members were advised that following the climate emergency declaration in 2019, the Council continued to work toward its target of a 70% carbon reduction by 2027. The Team Leader: Climate Change & Sustainability highlighted that mitigation and adaptation reporting had previously been separate, but the most recent Cabinet report combined both elements into a single, comprehensive document accompanied by updated action plans and a revised climate change risk register.

The Team Leader: Climate Change & Sustainability summarised a number of examples of work undertaken since the last reporting period, including the impact of extreme weather events in 2025, high levels of public concern

regarding climate change, and continued progress in reducing emissions from operational estates.

The Team Leader: Climate Change & Sustainability also outlined several recently completed decarbonisation projects, including major works at Wellington and Oakengates Leisure Centres, as well as wider initiatives such as Warm and Well Telford, NuPlace developments, and new active travel projects with local schools. Adaptation work was continuing across services, with updated business continuity plans and further support planned for Town and Parish Councils.

In response to questions raised in relation to active travel figures, the Team Leader: Climate Change & Sustainability explained that behavioural changes captured in the data included modal shift, park-and-stride uptake and car-sharing. The methodology behind school travel surveys was outlined and Members were advised that detailed data for the 2024/25 period would be available following its publication. Ongoing engagement with schools was aimed at ensuring that travel plans remained relevant and achievable.

Responding to queries regarding future electricity demand, the Team Leader: Climate Change & Sustainability explained that national work undertaken by the energy system operator had explored ways to improve grid capacity. While it was recognised that local demand was increasing due to the rise in electrification, a range of potential solutions existed and the Council continued to work proactively with partners and businesses seeking renewable energy connections.

The Committee noted that the Council operated a proportionate inspection programme across the highway, footpath and cycleway network in relation to tree safety and storm resilience. Although exceptional storms could not be fully mitigated, the approach balanced safety with the desire to retain the borough's established tree canopy. The Team Leader: Climate Change & Sustainability clarified the carbon cycle associated with tree felling and replacement planting.

Members sought further clarity on the role of SuDS and the impact of green infrastructure in managing water flow and resilience. The Team Leader: Climate Change & Sustainability advised that national guidance and local design expectations continued to evolve, ensuring new developments were able to retain more water than before development. Future reporting would present clearer links between project actions, emissions reduction and sequestration benefits.

In response to questions raised in relation to the achievability of the 2030 target, the Cabinet Member: Neighbourhoods, Planning & Sustainability acknowledged the Council's ambitious nature but emphasised that the authority had a clear understanding of the works required across its estate. Members heard that a number of schemes were ready to progress subject to funding opportunities. While significant emissions reduction had already been achieved, future rounds of decarbonisation funding would be important and

the intention remained to reduce emissions as far as possible before considering offsetting or sequestration.

The Committee welcomed the comprehensive update and noted the progress that had been made across a variety of projects.

ENVSC15 Shropshire Good Food Partnership

The Co-Director of the Shropshire Good Food Partnership presented an update to the Committee on food resilience work which had taken place across the borough.

Members were informed of projects supporting community cookery, surplus food redistribution, volunteer activities, engagement with allotment holders and local mapping exercises aimed at identifying assets and gaps.

The Partnership continued to work to secure further funding to expand community-based food activities and strengthen local food systems.

The Committee welcomed the update and noted the value of the work in supporting community resilience, healthy eating and local engagement. Members highlighted issues related to surplus allotment produce, opportunities for improved local supply chains and the challenges of embedding food-based education within schools. The Committee also commented on the wider carbon benefits of local food production and the resilience risks associated with national supply chains.

In response to questions regarding surplus allotment produce, the Co-Director of the Shropshire Good Food Partnership explained that legislation prevented commercial sale but allowed produce to be shared within the allotments or donated to community projects. The ongoing mapping work sought to ensure that surplus food could be redirected effectively.

Following comments raised about wider food production, the Co-Director of the Shropshire Good Food Partnership noted that commercial growing within the borough was limited and often linked to animal feed supply rather than local consumption. Strengthening local supply chains would require long-term strategic work and the Partnership's current activity aimed to build the evidence base needed for future funding bids.

Following questions raised in relation to food education, Members noted that recent pilots involving healthy eating sessions, composting, food sustainability and practical cookery had taken place. The Co-Director of the Shropshire Good Food Partnership explained that engagement with schools continued to be challenging due to curriculum pressures and funding constraints, however, the Partnership would continue to expand its offer as further funding became available.

Members noted the update and thanked the Co-Director of the Shropshire Good Food Partnership for their attendance at the meeting.

ENVSC16 Work Programme Review

The Lead Lawyer: Prosperity & Commercial presented the updated work programme.

Members were advised that the next scheduled meeting would take place on 29 April 2026 where the Committee was expected to receive an update on the Local Nature Recovery Strategy following its formal adoption.

As this would be the last meeting of the municipal year, any remaining items would be carried forward to form part of the work programme for the 2026/27 municipal year.

The Chair invited Members to put forward suggestions for additional topics which they would like to consider for the work programme.

ENVSC17 Chair's Update

The Chair thanked Members for their attendance and participation in the meeting and acknowledged the breadth of issues considered by the Committee during the current municipal year.

The meeting ended at 7.41 pm

Chairman:

Date: Wednesday 29 April 2026