

## SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL

### Meeting of the Council Held via Zoom At 3.30pm on Thursday 15 July 2021

#### PRESENT

Councillors D Vasmer (Chair), B Bentick, R Dartnall, J Dean (Mayor), K Halliday, C Lemon and A Mosley

#### IN ATTENDANCE

Helen Ball (Town Clerk), Amanda Spencer (Deputy Town Clerk), Chris Bainger (Environment Agency), Alan Leaman (Friends of the Earth), Jan McKelvey (Shropshire Wildlife Trust), Sharuff Morsa (Extinction Rebellion), John Ogle, Kevin Oubridge (Shropshire Climate Action Partnership), David Sharpe (AECB), Dan Wrench (Shropshire Council), Heather Phillips (Committee Clerk)

#### 01/21 APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed members of the Committee and the public to the first formal meeting of the Climate Change Standing Committee. It was noted that the meeting would be recorded and available to view via Facebook due to some technical issues.

#### RESOLVED:

**That apologies from Councillor A Wagner, Tom Endacott (Business Representative) and Richard Grindle (Shropshire Wildlife Trust) be accepted.**

#### 02/21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Shropshire Councillors	Twin hatted members declared personal interests in matters relating to the Town Council's relationship with Shropshire Council.
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#### 03/21 CHAIRMAN & VICE-CHAIRMAN

#### RESOLVED:

**That Councillors D Vasmer and B Bentick are appointed as Chairman and Vice-Chairman respectively as approved by Council.**

#### 04/21 TERMS OF REFERENCE

Ahead of the meeting the Terms of Reference and Chairmanship had been circulated to members outlining the membership of the Committee and its role. One principle change from the previous Climate Advisory Working Group was how to best allocate the Town Council's budget for the Committee's activities in addition to seeking ways in which to influence behaviour in the wider community and provide some exemplar.

## **RESOLVED**

**That the report be noted.**

### **05/21 CLIMATE CHANGE INITIATIVES BY SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL**

*Helen Ball left the meeting.*

Ahead of the meeting, a list of Climate Change Initiatives had been circulated to members together with an Appendix of initiatives as noted at the Climate Emergency Workshop of 6 February 2020. The Deputy Town Clerk summarised the report highlighting recent key milestones: the formation of this Committee, actions of 20/21 and Town Council staff work (under Item 3). Links have been made with Shropshire Council and the Shrewsbury Recovery Task Force and place-making initiatives extending beyond the Covid measures are being looked into.

S Morsa pointed out that some items under Item 3 in the report were repeated and this was noted.

Item 5 of the report outlined the main reasons for the Town Council's decision to oppose planning permission for the North West Relief Road but that more details can be supplied by the Deputy Town Clerk on request.

Councillor Dean asked that methods for procurement were added to the list as having a very effective procurement conditions would be an important way to influence other organisations in regards to climate change. The Deputy Town Clerk replied that work was already being done in this area, ie sourcing local suppliers and also requesting details about the transportation of goods. A questionnaire would be provided to Town Council suppliers to request information pertinent to climate change.

## **RESOLVED**

**That the report be noted.**

### **06/21 CLIMATE EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN 2020-2024**

The Action Plan was circulated to members ahead of the meeting and it was noted that it had also previously been submitted to the Finance & General Purposes Committee and the Climate Emergency Working Group earlier in the year. Actions have been updated. It is intended that this Action Plan is amended after every Climate Change Standing Committee meeting to reflect what was agreed. Councillor Dean added that an online version of this Plan could be available in order for members to add comments.

D Sharpe suggested that a column be added to the Plan to record the benefit(s) of an action, ie how much impact it will have on the carbon footprint, stressing the importance of measuring the effectiveness of these initiatives and how to measure future actions. Specific figures, eg the yearly reduction in tonnes of CO<sup>2</sup>, would also be useful in order to determine what is meant by "medium" or "low" impact. K Oubridge and A Leamon expressed their agreement.

Councillor Bentick stated that it was important to consider areas outside of the Committee's remit eg the Active Travel and Active Schools initiatives.

A Leaman asked if the Town Council's electric vehicle charging points could be made available for Council staff to charge their own vehicles while at work. The Deputy Town Clerk said that it was looking at this already and how this would be charged to the employee.

D Wrench enquired why recycling bins were not on the action plan and expressed concern that the carbon properties from tree-felling due to ash dieback was not being exploited; there are companies that can produce stable carbon from this waste. It was noted that recyclable waste from Town Council bins is separated from other rubbish by Veolia.

J McKelvey asked if an audit had been carried out to determine staff energy usage in their travel to work. Working from home helps reduce carbon footprint. The Deputy Town Clerk reported that so far this has only been discussed but realises that the Council should endeavour to set an example to the public at large. Commuting is still necessary for some staff and it is not possible for most operational staff to work from home.

Also under discussion is the provision of a pool of electric cars for staff to use while at work to travel between Council sites and the conversion of as many vehicles as possible to electric. Council contractors are included on the plan under *Town Council Staff & Members*. It was noted that Council suppliers should also be added to the Action Plan.

J Ogle enquired as to what level of information was available on energy use across the town. Although this information is available, it currently provides only that used by households. A map is required in order to plan: knowing the energy demands of industrial, commercial and residential areas would show where there are problems and room for improvement.

The Mayor suggested that Committee members should work towards the Committee's goals alongside Council staff. The Council could work towards obtaining a Carbon Literate Organisation award. It was also noted that areas of land where planning permission has been denied could be used for biodiversity gain or carbon capture: landowners in question would need to be approached.

A Leaman added that the Council needs to provide leadership to the public and give them advice about what they can do individually to work towards reducing climate change. Councillor Mosley cautioned about going beyond the Committee's overarching remit but suggested that temporary staff could be appointed to give time to this public relations exercise.

*Councillors Halliday and Dartnall joined the meeting.*

In addition, K Oubridge raised the possibility of using Town Council spaces to help promote zero carbon and biodiversity citing The Dingle as a possible location for improvement in this area. Although this would carry a very powerful message to the Shrewsbury community, it would remove the sort of horticulture The Dingle represents for many visitors. However, a contemporary garden, already planned for the old greenhouse/Queen Mother's garden area, could showcase a biodiverse, functional and productive garden to stimulate flora and fauna. It is envisaged that volunteers and local schools would be involved. The Deputy Town Clerk confirmed that the Town Council have ceased using peat-based compost.

A nature trail along the riverside, showing diversity and ecology in action, is also being devised. Councillor Halliday suggested these ideas could be expanded to other local areas eg the park at South Hermitage, Belle Vue; many schools now have eco-councils that would be interested.

D Wrench remarked that the wildflower verges, although attractive, had very few native species so should not strictly be badged as a climate/biodiversity initiative. A native meadow mix would be preferable as they wouldn't need digging up and therefore store carbon.

In reference to item 6 on the Action Plan, D Sharpe suggested that planning applications include a section on the impact of its plans on the climate ie aiming for the passive house standard for energy efficiency. The Deputy Town Clerk explained that although the Town Council are only consultees in the planning process, it can have some influence on the decisions made and that questions are now being asked about environmental impact of a project, especially larger developments. One issue that is gaining pertinence is that there are few Shrewsbury councillors on the Shropshire Council Planning Committee and that decisions are being made from members outside the town. Councillor Vasmer remarked that there is to be a review on this in September.

C Bainger raised the issue of the large amount of waste in litter bins coming from take-away containers (mostly polystyrene boxes) and mooted whether the Committee could stipulate that they only use recyclable packaging. Although the Council has no powers to insist upon this, those behind the Shrewsbury Cup initiative might be worth approaching to see if this could be expanded in some way.

#### **RESOLVED**

- (i) That a number of items be added to the Action Plan including:**
  - **Recycling bins**
  - **Ash dieback – the use of pyrolysis**
  - **Procurement questionnaire**
- (ii) That progress be made on drawing up a map of energy use across different sectors.**
- (iii) That the idea for planning applications to include a request for energy efficiency criteria be discussed at a meeting of the Planning Committee.**

#### **RECOMMENDED**

- (i) That members add new ideas to the Action Plan for them to be discussed at the next meeting.**

### **07/21 CLIMATE EMERGENCY BUDGET**

Ahead of the meeting, Members received a report on the Climate Emergency budget. In January 2020 the Town Council set its 2020/21 budget and set aside a £250,000 fund to look at climate mitigations measures over the next three years. In October 2020 the Finance & General Purposes Committee agreed to £78,785 of expenditure (see Climate Emergency Budget Report attached to the Agenda) leaving £171,215.

D Sharpe advised Members that some initiatives are counter-intuitively better in terms of carbon emissions and that whole-life carbon emission calculations should be undertaken to ensure that the Committee pursues the best option.

The Mayor acknowledged the impact of the work of the BID and suggested that the Committee could do something on a similar scale for Climate Change in the town. A Walking Festival is planned for Easter 2022 to celebrate walking as a mode of transport and partners will be sought to contribute. The Mayor is committed to getting involved in his mayoral year to make an impact in this area of the Town Council's work.

The Deputy town Clerk suggested that part of the budget could be used for two other Town Council projects: the purchase and re-purposing of the old Wakeman School field into a community-orientated grassland/woodland area; and, the management of new woodland as part of the Weir Hill housing development.

## **RESOLVED**

**That the Committee supports in principle the allocation for expenditure from the Climate Emergency budget for solar lights and the Mayoral vehicle based upon the difference between what they would have cost originally and the cost needed to make them more 'climate change friendly':**

- **Quarry solar extension**
- **Stanley Lane solar lighting along proposed new path**
- **New 100% electric toilet van**
- **100% electric Mayoral vehicle**

## **08/21 SHREWSBURY LOW CARBON HEAT NETWORK**

The Committee received a presentation from J Ogle to put forward a strategy to develop a Low Carbon Heat Network for Shrewsbury town centre; the presentation was circulated to members prior to the meeting. J Ogle talked members through his presentation showing how the strategy can work towards zero carbon emissions.

Although Shropshire Council would have to be heavily involved in such an initiative the Town Council would need to buy into it and try to use its influence to push for heat network capability being a requirement for all new builds. It was also noted that there has been an innovative site at a development on London Road by Cornovii; the Mayor and J Ogle plan to meet with Cornovii to find out more.

Councillor Mosley pointed out that the Flaxmill has a heat source pump in the ground that can supply 69% of the heating for the buildings on the site and that suggestions have been made that it could be extended to residential properties that might be developed in the area.

D Sharpe reiterated that the Committee would need to be careful about making decisions that at first appear to be the right solution but are not actually the most effective in terms of climate change and asked for data on the heat networks.

J Ogle was thanked for his presentation.

*The Town Clerk re-joined the meeting.  
Councillor Mosley left the meeting.*

#### **09/21 COMMUNITY CARBON USAGE**

The Deputy Town Clerk proposed that the Committee move on to the next item on the agenda as the extensive discussions on the Action Plan covered this item.

#### **10/21 BEAVER PROJECT UPDATE**

The Town Clerk referred Members to the report received prior to this meeting on the Old River Beaver Project. The old river bed is the proposed area for the re-introduction of beavers into the wild and this meets part of the climate change agenda. Beavers are not only native to this county but are regarded as a keystone species ie they help define an entire eco-system by filtering water, locking up carbon and preventing flooding, etc. The Town Council is working with the Shropshire Wildlife Trust on this project and will provide regular updates to the Committee.

#### **RESOLVED**

**That the report be noted.**

#### **11/21 TOWN COUNCIL VEHICLE PROCUREMENT**

Members of the Committee received a report prior to the meeting on the Town Council Vehicle Procurement. The Town Clerk announced that the Council is looking at the electrification of its fleet. It is procuring a small electric van for the toilet run in Autumn and would like to brand it with a climate change logo. Test-drives have been undertaken for an electric Mayoral vehicle and tenders are being sought up until the end of this month.

#### **RESOLVED**

- (i) The standing committee agree to support the funding of £5,918.84 for the extra spend on electric power.**
- (ii) The Standing Committee agree to support the funding the one off livery for the electric van approx. £500.**

#### **12/21 GREEN CANOPY/TREE CHARTER/ASH DIE BACK**

The Town Clerk referred Members to the report circulated prior to this meeting on trees adding that a report on signing up to the Tree Charter will be submitted to the next Recreation & Leisure Committee. The Charter works in partnership with the National Association of Local Councils to help support local councils in improving their canopy cover and create greater accessibility to woods and trees.

There are also plans for the Queen's Green Canopy (QGC) to mark the Platinum Jubilee in 2022 and the report contains details about the activity involved; the Town Council could be the deliverer for the County.

Ash dieback is a serious issue in the town and 15-20,000 trees are thought to be effected. The Town Clerk reported that the Countryside Team has carried out inspections to map the locations of the trees and is now into its second year of tree-felling operations. A programme of replacements is being considered.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**That the report is taken forward to the next meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee.**

#### **13/21 UPDATE ON MINI HOLLAND INITIATIVE**

The Town Clerk introduced the update, received by Members prior to the meeting, on the Mini Holland Initiative. The Town Council lobbied Shropshire Council to express an interest in this initiative (as this can only come from a unitary council) but unfortunately it was decided that the scheme would *not* be pursued. The Town Clerk expressed her disappointment on behalf of the Town Council.

#### **14/21 WEIR PROJECT UPDATE**

Members received a report on the Weir Project prior to the meeting and the Town Clerk reported that the Council is working with stakeholders and partners on a potential hydro scheme. The Council will be actively involved in this work as it takes place on Town Council land. Although the project is still in its infancy, it is proposed that it will be raised at a future Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting for discussion.

#### **RESOLVED**

**That the report be noted.**

#### **15/21 WEEPING CROSS UPDATE**

The Weeping Cross site is the Town Council's largest physical asset just off the A5 and Members received a report of proposals to future-proofing the site in terms of climate change before the meeting. A large fleet is based at the site and the Town Clerk reported that the Council is looking at installing more charging points for electric vehicles; there are currently two in place for staff to test them out.

The Council is also considering the possibility of having solar and wind power sources on site as well as the possibility for a heat network. The site currently runs an expensive oil boiler.

#### **RESOLVED**

**That the report be noted.**

## **16/21 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

It was noted that the next full Shropshire Council meeting is set to take place on 23 September and therefore an alternative date for the Climate Change Standing Committee will be sought. A calendar of future meetings will be issued in due course.

The Deputy Town Clerk concluded the meeting by apologising for the technical issues that were encountered and for the late start to the proceedings.