

SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL

**Meeting of the Climate Emergency & Nature Recovery Standing Committee
Held at the Weeping Cross Depot
At 2.30pm on Thursday 12 October 2023**

PRESENT

Councillors J Dean (Chair), B Bentick, and R Wilson.

Alex Grant (Shropshire Wildlife Trust), Chris Bainger (Environment Agency), Dan Wrench (Shropshire Council), Frank Oldacre (Friends of the Earth), Kevin Oubridge (Big Solar Co-op) and Tom Endacott (Gfleet)

IN ATTENDANCE

Amanda Spencer (Deputy Town Clerk) and Alan Jameson (Admin Apprentice/Climate Change Officer)

15/23 APOLOGIES

That apologies were received from Councillor C Lemon, David Sharpe, Councillor D Vasmer, Councillor K Pardy, and Sharuff Morsa.

It was noted that the meeting was not quorate due to the lack of councillors in attendance.

16/23 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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17/23 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the Climate Emergency & Nature Recovery Standing Committee meeting held on 17 July 2023 were submitted as circulated and read.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Climate Emergency & Nature Recovery Standing Committee meeting held on 17 July 2023 be approved and signed as a correct record.

18/23 MATTERS ARISING

The Deputy Town Clerk reported that all matters arising were included within the agenda.

The Chair directed an enquiry towards Chris Bainger and Dan Wrench regarding their conversation from the previous meeting about biochar, and whether it had borne any progress. They informed him that they had been in contact with one another.

The Chair requested an update on the Visioning exercise. The Deputy Town Clerk advised him that the strategic vision was due to go to a public consultation shortly. She would also let external members of the committee have sight of this consultation.

The Chair requested that a session on the Visioning Exercise be included on the agenda for the committee's next meeting.

19/23 COMMITTEE NAME CHANGE

The Chair confirmed the name change of the Committee to the Climate Emergency & Nature Recovery Standing Committee following approval by Full Council.

20/23 CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLAN 2020 - 2024

The Deputy Town Clerk notified the Committee that the Action Plan was close to completion barring some of the more substantial projects, and any outstanding matters would be included in the new draft action plan.

The Chair raised the question of how the Committee should respond to planning; he suggested that the Committee be more forceful in its proposals and responses to areas such as rivers, and to make note of what planners discover from new developments.

The Chair further advised that it may be prudent to informally encourage them to search for environmentally important issues when conducting their work, and to share these findings with other Town Councils.

Frank Oldacre offered the opinion that should Shropshire Council grant housing permission, then they may themselves be complicit in the offence of waste and discharge.

Chris Bainger emphasised caution when it came to accusations. He encouraged the review of several factors including capacity, offering information to what freehold is, management of stormwater, and over storage.

The Chair requested an update to the staff travel plan. He was informed that it was in its draft phase.

Tom Endacott enquired as to the status of the Carbon Footprint Audit. The Deputy Town Clerk advised that they were waiting to hear back from the auditors.

21/23 MARCHES ENERGY AGENCY

The Committee were updated on the Town Council's pledge of £75,000 to the Marches Energy Agency, and that they had so far approved around half a dozen applicants to the scheme.

Councillor Wilson encouraged getting some press behind the scheme.

Councillor Bentick requested information regarding the amount provided per property, and whether there was a waiting list.

The Deputy Town Clerk advised Councillor Bentick that the assistance provided would be between £2000 - £3000 per household; she further advised that they were receiving one or two applicants per week, and that the current flow was satisfactory.

22/23 CARBON LITERATE STATUS

The Committee was notified that the Council was due to apply for Silver Status accreditation from the Carbon Literacy Project after Councillor Mosley had completed his training.

23/23 E-CARGO BIKES

The Deputy Town Clerk informed the committee that two e-cargo bikes had been purchased just in time for Christmas.

Alex Grant asked who could hire them. He was advised that it was open to everyone. Councillor Wilson asked if there would be a charge. He was informed that there would be a nominal charge for maintenance.

Councillor Wilson proposed inviting families already using e-cargo bikes to get involved in a press release.

Councillor Bentick informed the Committee that Priory School were planning two climate related events in May and September, and that the Council could combine active travel week with Shrewsbury schools to attain much wider involvement. The Deputy Town Clerk replied that there was already something similar on the agenda.

24/23 EXTERNAL ATTENDEE PRESENTATION

Due to the technological limitations of the depot, it had been decided with Tom Endacott to postpone the presentation until the next meeting.

25/23 CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND NATURE RECOVERY WEEK 2024

The Committee were informed of the plan to have a week within Shrewsbury showcasing what the Town Council had been doing to combat climate change. This event would be open to the participation of others, and the Committee were asked if they had any suggestions.

Councillor Bentick suggested combining this event with the active travel week of schools. Together they could emphasise positive developments such as a reduction of congestion, and reduction of pollution. He highlighted that the priory school had an 85% rate of students walking to school.

Councillor Wilson added that Priory School attempted to encouraged other schools to participate and recommend that the Town Council also get involved.

The Deputy Town Clerk favoured this event primarily basing itself on the Town Council's operations and initiatives, while showcasing its expertise in areas such as horticulture. She stressed that while they could promote other things, it was important to not lose sight over the specific actions that the Town Council takes within its own operations to combat climate change.

Councillor Wilson proposed that Town Council staff could conduct an experiment where they attempt to change some of their habits for a week to become more climate friendly. After the week's conclusion they could see if there were any benefits of this change to their lifestyle.

Dan Wrench added to Councillor Wilson suggestion by highlighting the app "Pawprint", which helps calculate the Carbon savings of employees.

The Chair proposed that the event could take inspiration from the Pride Festival that had just taken place. He emphasised that many groups and organisations such as the B.I.D and local businesses could help plan something.

The Deputy Town Clerk emphasised that one of the reasons for the success of Pride was that there was organic growth.

Chris Bainger stressed the possible difficulty of getting people engaged with the Climate Emergency. He highlighted that this was due to the public's sensitivities when it came to the risk of being associated with a problem linked to protesting. He therefore suggested that the Council engage with the public positively and without confrontation, promoting learning and education with sincerity. He used the example of education on sewage disposal and the harms of chemicals being flushed down the sink. He advocated for finding issues that could strongly engage with members of the public.

The Deputy Town Clerk suggested using the Quarry to show people practical methods of reducing their carbon expenditure.

Kevin Oubridge concurred with the Deputy Town Clerk and emphasised that the Dingle could be a good central location for a demonstration on rewilding.

The Chair added to this suggestion by proposing the possibility of a wild patch in the Dingle for people to observe, and to be informed of the reason for its appearance.

Frank Oldacre suggested to use the Dingle as an example to emphasise its beauty, but to also explain that it could be beautiful differently.

Councillor Bentick proposed asking Severn Trent, the NFA, and other organisations to engage, and possibly provide financial support.

The Chair underlined the need of a partnership with the big players of Shrewsbury, highlighting the importance of working with various organisations such as the NHS and the football club. The Chair further added that the Town's businesses and large public actors should involve themselves and share their decarbonisation story.

The Deputy Town Clerk requested that members of the committee volunteer to drive the event forward, and that the Climate Change Officer and herself would make all the necessary contacts. The Chair offered his assistance to drive the event forward.

The Chair proposed screening a series of films based on climate change at the OMH.

Members of the Committee offered various suggestions of who could get involved with the project such as the NFA, the University, Shropshire Good Food Partnership, and Shropshire Council.

Kevin Oubridge enquired as to when the beavers would be released. He was informed by Alex Grant that this would be happening in 2024.

26/23 GRANT APPLICATION FROM CLIMATE FRESK SHREWSBURY

The Chair described Climate Fresk as being an appropriate piece of entry level climate training, and that it was a community focused product. Chris Bainger enquired how the Committee would be able to support it.

The Deputy Town Clerk advised that the Committee did not have the right to fund it but could support it and take it forward to the Finance Committee.

Kevin Oubridge highlighted Climate Fresk's advantage of being more interactive than literacy training, and that it was a good way of increasing public engagement.

Chris Bainger suggested making the product part of the Climate Emergency and Nature Recovery Week.

Tom Endacott raised the point that some of the funding from the grant would go towards hiring venues. He therefore suggested that the Town Council could offer up one of their locations.

The Chair agreed with Tom Endecott's suggestion. He emphasised that he was happy to support the grant but would like to make it more efficient.

The Deputy Town Clerk agreed to look into it.

27/23 TENDER APPLICATIONS – CARBON FOOTPRINT INFORMATION

The Deputy Town Clerk reminded the Committee of the sets of questions that the Council has on their tender forms regarding supply chains. She asked the Committee if they had any suggestions on further actions that the Council could be taking.

Councillor Wilson asked how the responses had been. He was informed that they were mixed.

Tom Endacott suggested that if they were not scoring it, then there was little reason to do it. He also proposed asking them about the actions they have taken, as opposed to the actions they would do due to it being 2023.

Dan Wrench advised that it would still be worth asking, even without scoring. He emphasised that it was better to score, but that it was also good to know that the Committee is interested as it shows enthusiasm.

The Deputy Town Clerk emphasised caution, suggesting that it was fine to ask questions, but not to penalise.

Tom Endacott enquired if it was possible to score. He was informed that they could give nominal score.

Kevin Oubridge advised that it was easier for larger corporations to change their processes, but that it was far harder for local businesses to do the same. He suggested the possibility of offering them support on how they can change.

Councillor Bentick further added that local suppliers are put off by complexity, and asked if there was any government or organisational guidance for these types of issues.

The Chair suggested handing out the Mayor's Guide to the climate crisis to tenderers and asking if they had ready it.

The Chair suggested to look at which organisations are responding.

28/23 NEXT MEETING

The next Committee meeting will be held on 11 January 2023 at 2.30pm. External attendee presentation to be given by Tom Endacott.