

**SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL**

**Meeting of the Climate Change Committee  
Held at the Grange Youth Centre  
At 3.00pm on Thursday 9 February 2023.**

**PRESENT**

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

Chris Bainger (Environment Agency), Dan Wrench (Shropshire Council), Alex Grant (Shropshire Wildlife Trust) Frank Oldacre (Friends of the Earth), and Mike Dineen (Civic Society).

**IN ATTENDANCE**

Andy Watkin (Head of Resources), Michelle Farmer (Committee Clerk) and Alan Jameson (Admin Apprentice/Climate Change Officer).

**27/22 APOLOGIES**

That apologies were received from David Sharpe

**28/22 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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**29/22 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

The minutes of the Climate Change Standing Committee meeting held on 27 October 2022 were submitted as circulated and read.

**RESOLVED:**

**That the minutes of the Climate Change Standing Committee meeting held on 27 October 2022 be approved and signed as a correct record.**

**30/22 MATTERS ARISING**

The Head of Resources provided the following updates at the meeting.

**19/22** Beaver Project update - The agreement had been finalised and signed and had now been circulated to prospective funders to meet funding deadlines. All necessary licences had been granted with Natural England & DEFRA so they were now in a position to seek formal tender for the construction of the Beaver Compound and Boardwalk. The tender closing date was 3 March 2023. Financing was in place for the construction work and they were working with colleagues at the Wildlife Trust on the communications and ongoing management of this project.

Councillor Moseley enquired if the compound/footpath would also be improved. The Head of resources informed that these improvements formed part of it, and he would look more into whether staff plan on doing more in the area surrounding the project.

**18/22** Bus Shelter Sedum Roofs - The Projects Manager had provided an update on the Bus Shelter replacements. The project was progressing well, all non-sedum roofs had now been installed. 19 Sedum equip roofs had started to be installed at various locations across the town. The target for completion of the installs was set at the end of the financial year, this appeared to be on schedule. The shelters had so far been received well by the public, although a question had been asked about the stainless-steel bench. Stainless steel not only matched the rest of the shelter but also provided a more durable and hard-wearing bench than previously installed.

**20/22** Green Advantage – Skills Bootcamp in Sustainability - The Town Clerk reported at the last meeting about this course, funded by the West Midlands Combined Authorities, and taught at Aston Business School in Birmingham. The programme was designed for business leaders, managers and professionals who want to consider the implications of climate and environmental challenges for their business or workplace. The aim of the course was to embed sustainability into an organisation looking at the mix between economic/social/environmental factors. The Town Clerk had to create a Sustainability Roadmap for the Council as part of the learning objectives of the course. She had feedback on how useful the course had been giving an added dynamic to the ongoing Climate Action Plan and Visioning Exercise.

Councillor Dean enquired whether the Town Council had committed to Bronze Status and their way through the carbon neutral process. He enquired whether more members were going through the process and if this should be added to the Action Plan. He suggested that this was investigated further and reported back to the next meeting.

Chris Bainger informed the Council that his organisation had reached gold status, which he considered to have been very valuable. He made members aware that this had been a three-day course.

It was noted that the Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk had already completed this along with several Councillors. Councillor Vasmer recommended that further Councillors and staff take part in this course and investigate accreditation.

Councillor Mosely provided members with an update on E Cargo bikes. The Council's decision had been to purchase two E Cargo bikes and hand them over to Mark Fermor from Shropshire Cycle Hub, to test out around the town. Mark Fermor was currently considering this proposition and was arranging further meetings with the Town Council.

The Head of Resources confirmed that they were waiting for an update from Mark Fermor on this, but he was currently on leave. An update would be provided to the Committee upon his return.

## **31/22 CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLAN 2020-2024**

The Head of Resources informed the committee that the plan was just for noting today. He also noted that the Town Council was undertaking a Visioning Exercise and an Action Plan would form part of that work. Once this was finished as well as the Carbon Footprint Audit completed, the Climate Action Plan would need to be revisited.

Councillor Dean enquired if the Council had an update regarding the carbon audit. Councillor Vasmer informed the Committee that as the Deputy Town Clerk was on sick leave, the Council did not currently have the information needed, but it would be reported back at the next meeting.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

**That an update on the Carbon Audit be reported at the next Climate Change Meeting**

### **32/22 EXTERNAL ATTENDEE PRESENTATION**

Councillor Vasmer enquired if one of the external attendees would consider a presentation at the next meeting, providing a report about their work to tackle Climate Change. This request followed a presentation by the Wildlife Trust at the previous meeting. Councillor Vasmer suggested that a timetable be composed for all external attendees to provide a presentation at future meetings.

Councillor Dean agreed, suggesting the invite was extended to other stakeholders, giving them an opportunity to explain what they were doing to combat Climate Change.

Councillor Bentick agreed with Councillor Dean's suggestion and enquired whether the ICS (Integrated Care Systems) could be contacted to attend a meeting.

Chris Bainger agreed that he would be happy to provide a presentation at the next Climate Change Meeting and would discuss this further with the Committee Officer.

Councillor Dartnall raised concerns regarding putting too much pressure on stakeholders and suggested a list of stakeholders to be invited to future meetings was compiled.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

- i) That the Deputy Town Clerk and Committee Officer compile a timetable for future presentations at Climate Change meetings for existing external attendees.**
- ii) That a list of Stakeholders be compiled to also attend future meetings**

### **33/22 SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL INSETTING AND OFFSETTING INITIATIVES**

The Head of Resources informed the committee of the discussion of the previous meeting where there was a brief discussion about the difference between inseting and offsetting. He also updated members that the Deputy Town Clerk had been through the action plan and other actions taken by Shrewsbury Town Council to indicate what they currently did, and it was clear that the vast majority of their actions were offsetting carbon emissions. Furthermore, he explained that the Action Plan also included a number of actions that would do neither but still had a significant impact upon the way the Town Council operated. Additionally, he stated that the Action Plan did not yet reveal the quantities of carbon that each of these activities would either inset or offset but the Carbon Footprint Audit currently being undertaken would reveal some of this data shortly.

The Head of Resources ended with the update that the Town Clerk had contacted Adrian Cooper at Shropshire Council, and was signposted to some LGA tools, which would possibly be useful and were themselves used by Shropshire Council.

Dan Wrench enquired if the Council was specifically focused on carbon reducing or replacing.

The Head of Resources replied that he would discuss this further with the Deputy Town Clerk upon her return.

Councillor Dean gave the opinion that overly focusing on the terminology was not very useful as it resulted in distractions that did not go anywhere.

Dan Wrench stated the distinction was important because carbon removal was better for attracting corporate investment.

Frank Oldacre gave a warning about the dangers of some fraudulent offsetting schemes.

Alex Grant inputted that reduction alone would not lead to carbon zero, and the adoption of offsetting and onsetting was necessary. He also agreed that it was important to be careful with some schemes and to identify sensible ones.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

**That this topic be reported back at the next meeting.**

### **34/22 ST JOHNS HILL**

The Head of Resources informed the Committee that the update received from the Project Manager was that the building at St Johns Hill was progressing well, currently to budget and timescales. Plasterers had now finished. The working group met on site on 26 January to view progress and discussed any issues. Thermal upgrading was completed on 27 January. Secondary Glazing would commence w/c 13 February.

Following a report from Dave Green at Share Energy, in which was listed the carbon reducing priorities, the following would be carried out before moving in:

- Secondary glazing to all front elevation windows
- Thermal boarding & re-plaster to second floor
- Loft insulation installation

Councillor Vasmer thanked the Head of Resources for the update and asked the Committee if they had any comments.

Councillor Dean requested a review to see if savings could be made, and to take decisions based on advice. Furthermore, he suggested a further review once the work had been completed.

Councillor Bentick explained the usefulness of a carbon audit before commencement of work as it would allow one to observe the effect of the work being completed. He enquired if there were figures available on savings, were there any cost savings and what was the amount of carbon reduction achieved by the changes made.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

**The Head of Resources would obtain further information and report back to the next meeting.**

## **35/22 COMMONPLACE**

The Climate Change Officer provided an update to members and highlighted some of the key points of the report.

The Commonplace Website had been developed to serve multiple purposes, one of which was to keep the public updated as to the Council's climate actions, and why they were important. For example, there was a page about renewable energy, which explained what it was, and how it protected the environment, which gave justification as to why the Council now used one hundred percent renewable electrical energy.

He also informed the Committee that the website also attempted to prevent any misunderstandings with the public. An example of this came from the page regarding electric vehicles. Some members of the public had been quite concerned with electric vehicles due to the mining of lithium needed for the batteries, which was harmful to the environment. However, the page explained how the life cycles of electric vehicles were far less harmful than traditional vehicles citing sources such as the ICCT (International Council on Clean Transportation) and the European Environment Agency. This had been done to inform the public as well as protect the Council's image.

The Climate Change Officer also explained that there was the ability for members of the public to give feedback on the Councils initiatives and have their own input.

The final point raised was about the design of the Website. Many of the Commonplace websites which had been viewed were not very inspiring and did not invite the reader in. Therefore, effort was made to make the website aesthetically pleasing, which included using high quality images that were commercially free to use and required no royalties.

Councillor Mosely enquired when the website would be ready. He was advised that it should be ready by the end of the month.

Members offered their own suggestions as to what could be put on the website. Chris Bainger suggested a section about onsetting and offsetting, as well as having a QR code feature.

Councillor Dean suggested the website could be an information source and that information about warmer homes and reusable heat should be on there, and that there should be a feature on the Beaver Project.

Councillor Mosely suggested that the website should act as an exemplar to highlight issues that would bring interest from outside, but to avoid overwhelming information.

Councillor Vasmer suggested Commonplace be used as both a resource and consultation tool, which could be linked to various organisations and schools.

Councillor Dartnall requested that the website be fully tested before the official launch.

### **RESOLVED:**

**That the report be noted.**

### **36/22 OTHER QUESTIONS/PROJECTS**

Frank Oldacre raised concerns regarding the plastic in Shropshire Council's blue recycle bags degrading, which could cause issues such as the spread of micro plastics.

Councillor Vasmer had also raised this issue with Shropshire Council and suggested to formally recommend to Shropshire Council to replace the degrading blue bags.

### **37/22 NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting was scheduled for 6 April, but several members commented that this was during the school holidays. The Committee Officer agreed to re-schedule the date of the next meeting and inform all members of the change.