

SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL

**Meeting of the Climate Emergency & Nature Recovery Standing Committee
Held at Livesey House, 7 St Johns Hill
At 2.00pm on Tuesday 1 October 2024**

PRESENT

Councillors J Dean (Chair), R Dartnall, P Moseley and R Wilson (substitute for D Vasmer).

Alex Grant (Shropshire Wildlife Trust), Frank Oldacre (Friends of the Earth), Tom Endacott (Gfleet) and David Sharpe (AECB).

IN ATTENDANCE

Helen Ball (Town Clerk), Amanda Spencer (Deputy Town Clerk) and Michelle Farmer (Committee Officer).

01/24 APOLOGIES

That apologies were received from Councillor B Bentick, Councillor A Mosley, Councillor D Vasmer, Chris Bainger (Environment Agency), Mike Dineen (Shrewsbury Civic Society) and Jim Goldsmith (Countryside & Greenspace Manager).

02/24 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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03/24 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the Climate Emergency & Nature Recovery Standing Committee meeting held on 18 April 2024 were submitted as circulated and read.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Climate Emergency & Nature Recovery Standing Committee meeting held on 18 April 2024 be approved and signed as a correct record.

04/24 MATTERS ARISING

Min 48/23 – Councillor Dartnall responded to Councillor Bentick's query for providing advice on home insulation. She asked whether the Town Council could publicise 'Green Open Homes' (previously called Green Doors). Green Open Homes invited you to look around some beautiful properties across Shropshire on October 19th & 20th and 26th & 27th, to find out about how people could make their home cosier and reduce energy costs. There was an opportunity to meet the owners who had improved their homes' energy efficiency to save both money and carbon. It was a free event, run by Marches Energy Agency. People who

were interested could use this link: [The National Network for Low-carbon Open Homes \(greenopenhomes.net\)](http://The National Network for Low-carbon Open Homes (greenopenhomes.net))

RESOLVED:

That the Town Council publicise this event on the Climate Change Website and via social media.

05/24 CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLAN 2020 - 2024

The Deputy Town Clerk reported that this had been a standing item on the agenda, but most of the actions had been completed and that it was probably time any outstanding actions be incorporated in the Town Council's Strategic Plan.

Councillor Dean commented on certain entries of the action plan:

Item 13 - Review energy provider renewable energy commissioning. He queried whether the Town Council had switched to 100% green energy, as the Energy Audit suggested not. The Deputy Town Clerk reported that the Town Council had in fact switched and the Audit would be amended accordingly.

Item 23 - Investigate the use of pyrolysis for all waste – He suggested that this should be done in conjunction with Shropshire Council and whether Jim Goldsmith could look into this, whether Town Council material could be used as a medium and whether there might be a suitable location for a more local pyrolysis machine. The Deputy Town Clerk reported that this was already being looked at.

Entry 31 - Develop Volunteering Opportunities – He asked whether officer lead names be updated and whether there were any volunteering opportunities regarding nature recovery. The Town Clerk confirmed she was talking with Public Health regarding all volunteer opportunities and potentially developing a scheme through the third sector as part of Shropshire Council's SLA.

Entry 32 - Initiate a Climate Emergency Grant Fund to support community initiatives – He noted that an independent fund had not been forthcoming but there had been a number of climate related applications through the Community Fund. He asked whether the Head of Resources could collate a list for the next meeting.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Countryside Manager continues discussions with Shropshire Council regarding pyrolysis;**
- (ii) That the Head of Resources collates data on grants to bring to the next meeting**

06/24 VISIONING EXERCISE

The Deputy Town Clerk reported on the online Visioning survey and presented headline facts. 502 responses were received and a number of in person sessions were held although these were poorly attended. Respondents were asked to rank each of the key objectives

under the six strategic objectives with 5 = very important to 1 = very unimportant. Respondents were also asked for any comments they had about each group of Key Objectives. The results of the survey had been sent to all members prior to the meeting.

Frank Oldacre commented that there was a good balance of questions, but he was disappointed regarding the lack of support for Britain in Bloom. He commented that nature was strong in the survey but he would like to have added pesticides to it as he would like a pesticide free Shrewsbury. There was an opportunity to reduce pesticides in the town area and they should be encouraging residents and landowners not to use them.

Councillor Dartnall agreed with this comment and asked if the Town Council did work to show what could be done and to bring a report to the next committee meeting on the Town Council's use of pesticides. The education aspect was vital.

Councillor Dean was in support of this idea and the possibility of publicity on this topic as the public may not know the alternatives so they needed to be informed of their options.

Tom Endacott asked if it was possible for the Committee to drill down into the data more. The Town Clerk agreed to look into this.

David Sharpe asked if there would be pesticide free use in the new park to be located on Smithfield Road. The Town Clerk replied that they had been in discussions with the landscape architect and could talk to them further. She also said she would enquire about the 'No Mow' trials with other Town Councils nationally. It was suggested that Jim Goldsmith attended the next meeting to explore the use of pesticides and the No Mow trial. The Town Clerk added there had been a presentation at a previous Recreation & Leisure Committee which Jim could revisit and bring to this Committee.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That a report is presented at the next Climate meeting regarding the Town Council's use of Pesticides;**
- (ii) That the Town Clerk make the raw data available to the Committee.**

07/24 GREAT BIG GREEN WEEK 2024

As part of the Climate Emergency and Nature Recovery Action Plan, Shrewsbury Town Council committed to organising an event to raise awareness of the climate emergency across the town. After investigation, it was agreed that the most effective way to do this was as part of the national event Great Big Green Week. Great Big Green Week was the UK's biggest ever celebration of community action to tackle climate change and protect nature. 75 local organisations across the town were asked if they wished to participate in the week. This included large organisations such as Shropshire Council and the Environment Agency, locally based community groups such as Men's Shed and Street Pastors, the BID and locally based charities. She also wrote to all Shrewsbury based schools and colleges.

A total of 17 events took place in Shrewsbury across Great Big Green Week which involved over 20 organisations. It was anticipated that around 500 people attended these events and, from those who did attend, feedback was hugely positive. The Town Council also ran a

Climate Change Competition for local young people as a way to engage with younger members of the town about their views on the climate crisis and what should be done to address this. This competition was publicised to all schools and youth groups across the town and they had received plenty of entries.

The Town Council participated in Great Big Green itself on the 12 June 2024, firstly by holding a Climate Fair in the Square, which publicised the Town Council's Young Shrewsbury service alongside other organisations, but also by demonstrating their own approaches to addressing the climate emergency at Burr's Field and in the Quarry.

Councillor Wilson thanked Alan Jameson, the apprentice who had now left, for the work he had put into the Climate Change Committee during his time with the Town Council.

Councillor Dartnall commented that at next year's event hopefully the Councillors could be more involved as they couldn't this year due to the pre-election period.

The Town Clerk suggested they used the contacts the Town Council had on their Clean River Working Group (i.e Environment Agency, Severn Trent) to see if they would like to be involved.

Councillor Dean suggested contacting Shropshire Council with a specific angle as this may get more interest and suggested Public health and nature recovery as possible themes.

It was noted that Great Big Green Week for 2025 was 7-15 June.

RESOLVED:

- (i) The report be noted;**
- (ii) That the Town Council commits to coordinate Shrewsbury's participation in Great Big Green Week 2025.**

08/24 CARBON LITERATE STATUS

The Deputy Town Clerk reported that the Town Council had achieved Bronze Status and this would be awarded in early 2025.

There was the opportunity to move forward towards Silver Status but there was a need for more staff and Councillors to be carbon literacy trained.

09/24 CLIMATE AUDIT

Shrewsbury Town Council declared a climate emergency in 2019 committing to reduce carbon emissions within the organisation and achieve carbon net zero by 2023. As part of this commitment the Town Council commissioned Carbon Footprint Ltd to undertake a carbon footprint appraisal of all activities. The report of their findings for the period April 2023 – March 2024 was presented to committee.

As part of their audit, Carbon Footprint Ltd had made a number of recommendations of what steps the Town Council needed to take to reduce carbon emissions. These involved:

- Improving the accuracy of future carbon footprint assessments

- Expand the Scope of the Assessment
- Target setting for net zero
- Reducing emissions

Following the receipt of the report, the Deputy Town Clerk met with Carbon Footprint regarding the report and made the following observations:

- Energy Usage – Their current tariff was still carbon heavy and given current usage equated to 162.09 tonnes of CO₂e per annum (35% of total usage). They recommend moving to a supplier such as Octopus and felt that this could make a big carbon saving. It was however noted that the Town Council already procured 100% carbon free energy.
- Vehicle Fuel Usage – There was a large amount of diesel usage in the fleet which amounted to 65.23 tonnes of CO₂e. They recommended switching to an alternative fuel supply such as Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO). They also recommended continuing to electrify their fleet wherever possible.
- Quality of Data – It would be useful to increase the rate of responses to the staff commuting survey
- They also recommended:
 - Participating in a Net Zero Workshop with them every four years
 - Installing an electric vehicle charging scheme at the Weeping Cross Depot to encourage staff to purchase electric vehicles.
 - Offsetting through carbon credits.

Committee Member Tom Endacott reviewed the report and made the following observations and recommendations:

He believed the most important recommendation was establishing a clear pathway to net zero for all the major emission sources and perhaps this should be the focus now that they had the footprint. If they look at:

- Gas Oil Use – 31.4%
- Electricity Use – 15.6%
- Diesel & Petrol – 15.9%
- Commuting – 12.7%

The total covered was 75% - and over 90% as reductions in these areas would also cover most of the Scope 3 WTT (well to tank) emissions. It didn't mean they could forget the other areas – but perhaps these should be the focus for now.

To create a reduction pathway, they needed to understand how this energy was being used. Reducing diesel and petrol use was going to focus on shifting to electric vehicles where possible and perhaps using HVO as an interim fuel where this wasn't possible.

The council used fuel cards, so attributing fuel use to vehicles should be relatively simple. It may be worth checking this data periodically and understanding which parts of the fleet were responsible for most of the emissions.

Electricity use was harder to understand without detailed metering. What was using the electricity and when? Perhaps some of the climate change committee funds could be spent on some clamp meters to automate reporting of energy use. It would be good to understand

which sites contributed the most to this – and then look at installing energy monitors at these sites. If this was set up correctly, this would allow them to see what exactly was using the energy and understand better if there were any ways to reduce energy use. Location based emissions would fall as the grid decarbonises so this would come down without any intervention of the council, but it would be good to understand if there were any other savings to be made – they were paying for all this electricity after all.

Gas Oil use again required better understanding of how this was used:

- How much was used in plant (if any after recent legislation changes), and how much was used in heating greenhouses?
- What were the alternatives for heating the green houses?
- Was it possible to fit some flow monitors on the current system and log how much was used and when – they would then be able to calculate the heating demand of the greenhouses and better assess any alternative technologies.

Commute was again difficult – as the report stated a salary sacrifice scheme was an option, and would encourage uptake of EVs, but this was not an option for everyone. How did the staff travel survey go and were there any obvious areas that could be improved from that.

On a more practical side, what resources did the council have to do this? Was there someone at the council who would be responsible for implementing these recommendations and did they have the time required and the skill / knowledge base to do so.

There was a lot of expertise on the Climate Change Committee, and it may be worth having a meeting with whoever would be implementing this to understand what parts they were comfortable with, and where they needed help. If the members of the Committee could help either directly or through some type of mentoring, then great, and if not then perhaps there were some CPD courses that would be appropriate.

Councillor Dartnall suggested the possibility of using solar panels on the greenhouse at the depot to try and generate their own energy.

Councillor Wilson asked where the Town Council was in regards to their fleet. The Town Clerk replied saying that obtaining small electric vans were not a problem, but they did struggle to find alternatives for transit vans and they were also currently price prohibitive. Councillor Wilson suggested that this could be considered at the next budget setting.

David Sharpe suggested they grouped what happened month to month, with heating and oil spread across the year and they may be able to find trends.

Councillor Dean commented on decarbonising the Market Hall and that there was the potential to improve waste issues there.

It was suggested setting up a practical group of no more than 4 people who would interpret data.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (i) The report be noted.**

- (ii) **That the Town Council looks to establish a small group of Committee members and officers to review the data and propose a set of actions in order to reduce carbon usage going forward to enable the Council to reach Carbon Zero by 2030.**

10/24 LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY SURVEY

The Local Nature Recovery Strategy was part of a nationwide move to create the space and connectivity needed on land and sea to see nature thrive, recover and be resilient. The intention of the strategy was to understand which outcomes were most wanted for nature and wildlife in Shropshire.

The Deputy Town Clerk had completed the survey on behalf of the Climate Committee as it was during the pre-election period. She enquired as to whether the Committee wished to submit any further information.

The Town Clerk reported on her discussions with officers at Shropshire Council charged with developing the Local Nature Recovery Strategy. They were keen to engage with the Town Council and understand the level of local aspirations. She suggested it may be useful to invite officers to discuss matters further.

RESOLVED:

That the Local Nature Recovery Strategy Officer be invited to the next meeting to give a presentation on developing the county Strategy.

11/24 OPERATIONAL UPDATE ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Jim Goldsmith was unable to attend the meeting today, so a report was given by the Town Clerk providing an operational update.

The first quarter of 2024 had seen the wettest conditions in the last thirty years and the eighth wettest in history. Since July 2023, five feet of water had fallen. The flood barriers have been erected five times and flood water had been in the Quarry and across the County Ground three times. On many of their sites they had standing water in places where this had never happened before. Apart from the rain, it had also been a colder spring than normal. This wet weather had an impact on the operational work, but the colder weather had kept the Spring bulbs flowering for longer.

Since the beginning of April, they had four machines out cutting for the majority of the time. In the first two weeks, they got stuck on numerous occasions and it was decided that because of the damage they were causing to the ground, mowing would stop for a few days. Since they had started again the weather had improved and they had been out every working day. By the end of May, they had cut the majority of the town once. Some areas had been missed because the ground was still too wet, but they hoped to pick these up on the next cut. The grass was long in many areas and was taking longer to cut than normal and leaving a lot of arisings on the top. On the plus side, the colder weather was slowing grass growth down.

The large tractor and mower had been too heavy to use up until the last week in April when it got stuck on one school site and had to be recovered by another tractor. We found that

the large open spaces and school mowing required carrying out so because of this they had to use a smaller tractor and mower where the cutting unit was a third of the normal size we use. Sites had been cut, but it has taken longer. With the ground conditions improving, they had sent the large machine out and had cut all sites once.

The football season, after a request from the Sunday League, had been extended by one week to end on May 12. They would have played all their fixtures on Town Council pitches by this date. The Junior league had also been extended to May 12. End of season renovation then started which includes overseeding, Earthquaking Aeration, Goal post take down and topdressing with sand to improve drainage.

The whole cricket season had been moved back from 27 April to start on 4 May. This was going to extend the season to the 28 September. The consequences of this were that the end of season renovations did not start until October. By then the days and nights were cooler and grass seed germination took longer. They also experienced floods in late October which washed the topdressing away. Finishing this late meant that the Cricket and Football seasons would overlap by a month, causing extra work for the staff.

The first week of the rounders season was cancelled because of the wet conditions, but they had now played their season.

The grass tennis courts were three weeks late because of the weather. Monkmoor Recreation Ground tarmac courts required power washing and this work was carried out the week beginning 6 May.

Dingle, Castle, and Town Centre - All had been kept to a high standard over the winter period. The spring bulbs had lasted well because of the cooler temperatures. The Dingle flower beds required topping up with soil as they were now lower than the surrounding lawns. This would require about 12 tons of topsoil.

They had grown a number of the summer bedding plants from seed this year to reduce their costs. They had been able to do this by using the propagation bench they built this winter.

A number of play areas across the town were closed because of waterlogging during the winter. Some had been topped up with wood chips and had general maintenance carried out.

A full season of tree work had been completed including the removal of trees identified in the Ash Die back survey. Tree work for Shropshire Council and trees identified by the Town Council of requiring work were being actioned but at times the ground conditions had made this more difficult to complete. To replace trees that have been removed, over forty trees have been planted across the Town.

ORB Beaver Project - There had been a lot of work carried out by the team, weekly site visits, repair of storm damage and Tree protection work.

All sites had been regularly checked, any damage or vandalism to steps, handrails or bridges had been repaired. Bird Boxes had been installed at Greenfields Recreation Ground, Raby Crescent Recreation Ground and Mousecroft Community Woodland.

Over this winter season the Operations Managers would look to undertake the following work:

- (i) Review how grass verges were maintained with Highways Colleagues with a view to leaving some verges to grow wild;
- (ii) Review the Town Councils Tree Management Plan and in particular the tree inspection regimes in prime locations;
- (iii) Review the choice of planting to develop more sustainable and resilient planting schemes;
- (iv) Review the impact on machinery particularly taking note of repairs and servicing, fuel used and the replacement/depreciation period of kit;
- (v) Review new technology to potentially free up staff and improve efficiency;
- (vi)** Review the effect on staff of climatic conditions and to maintain an estate in ever changing adverse conditions

The Town Clerk added that the report showed that Climate Change was happening locally and how the Town Council managed their estate had changed in the last ten years. Changing how they worked would be a key factor. Councillor Dean asked that the Town Clerk looked at how this could be publicised wider.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the report be noted;**
- (ii) That the Town Clerk look to publicising Climate Change impact wider.**

12/24 NATURE RECOVERY CONFERENCE

The Town Clerk informed committee that there was a Nature Recovery Conference organised by SALC which would be taking place on Friday 6 December in Church Stretton. The conference was open to all, but she advised booking a place as soon as possible.

13/24 NEXT MEETING

The next Committee meeting will be held on 16 January 2025 at 2.30pm. External attendee presentation to be given by Kevin Oubridge.