

Committee Report Checklist

Please submit the completed checklists with your report. If final draft report does not include all the information/sign offs required, your item will be delayed until the next meeting cycle.



Stage 1

Report checklist – responsibility of report owner

ITEM	Yes / No	Date
Councillor engagement / input from Chair prior to briefing	Yes	08/07/25
Commissioner engagement (if report focused on issues of concern to Commissioners such as Finance, Assets etc)	No	
Relevant Group Head review	Yes	24/07/25
MAT+ review (to have been circulated at least 5 working days before Stage 2)	Yes	17/07/25
This item is on the Forward Plan for the relevant committee	Yes	02/07/25
	Reviewed by	
Risk comments	L O'Neil	30/07/25
Legal comments	L Heron	23/07/25
HR comments (if applicable)	N/A	

For reports with material financial or legal implications the author should engage with the respective teams at the outset and receive input to their reports prior to asking for MO or s151 comments.

Do not forward to stage 2 unless all the above have been completed.

Stage 2

Report checklist – responsibility of report owner

ITEM	Completed by	Date
Monitoring Officer commentary – at least 5 working days before MAT	L Heron	27/07/25
S151 Officer commentary – at least 5 working days before MAT	Terry Collier	22/7/25
Confirm final report cleared by MAT		

Environment & Sustainability

18th September 2025

Title	Change of name and Terms of Reference of the Climate Change Working Group
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report Author	Arthur Stokhuyzen, Climate Change Officer
Ward(s) Affected	All Wards
Exempt	No
Corporate Priority	Environment
Recommendations	Committee is asked to: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Approve the change in name of the 'Climate Change Working Group' to the 'Climate and Nature Working Group'2. Consider and approve the revised Terms of Reference (ToR) set out in Appendix A. Refer the report to Standards Committee to make a recommendation to Council for adoption in the Constitution.
Reason for Recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The recommendation reflects the need to align the Group's remit with the Council's growing focus on both climate change and nature.• The new name and terms of reference will support councillors' engagement in upcoming biodiversity and planning projects and improve governance.• This change also brings us in line with other Surrey authorities who have already adopted a similar approach.

1. Executive summary of the report *(expand detail in Key Issues section below)*

What is the situation	Why we want to do something
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The current Climate Change Working Group focuses primarily on climate-related issues and has limited engagement from councillors beyond core members.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• New biodiversity and strategic planning projects require greater councillor involvement, and climate and nature are increasingly seen as interconnected policy areas.
This is what we want to do about it	These are the next steps
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Broaden the Group's remit to include nature recovery and biodiversity, rename it the <i>Climate and Nature</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seek Environmental and Sustainability Committee approval for the revised name and terms of reference

<p><i>Working Group</i>, and allow all councillors to attend sessions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer the proposed changes to Standards Committee to make a recommendation to Council for adoption in the Constitution.
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2. Key issues

- 2.1 The existing Climate Change Working Group (CCWG) has focused primarily on issues relating to carbon reduction, energy, and climate resilience. However, as the Council's environmental agenda expands, there is an increasing need for more integrated consideration of biodiversity, nature recovery, and land use, which are central to achieving long-term sustainability goals and delivering on statutory duties, such as the biodiversity duty under the Environment Act 2021.
- 2.2 Several new and ongoing projects – including the Miyawaki Forests project, the development of 'Habitat Banks', and work to establish a governance framework for our 'Biodiversity Duty' – require structured input from councillors to shape direction, secure support, and ensure alignment with wider Council priorities. These topics sit outside the traditional scope of the CCWG and would benefit from a broader remit and more inclusive approach to member engagement.
- 2.3 This would strengthen the continuity between the Climate Change and Biodiversity services which already both report to and have their budgets reviewed by Environment and Sustainability Committee.
- 2.4 To address this, it is proposed to:
 - (a) Rename the Group as the Climate and Nature Working Group (CNWG) to reflect a more holistic focus;
 - (b) Expand the terms of reference to formally include nature recovery, biodiversity and other relevant environmental matters;
 - (c) Allow all councillors to attend sessions to promote wider engagement, transparency, and collective ownership of the Council's environmental strategy.
- 2.5 These changes will bring our approach in line with best practice across other Surrey districts and boroughs, many of which have already adopted combined climate and nature working group structures. They will also create a stronger foundation for integrated decision-making and delivery as we respond to the dual challenges of the climate and ecological emergencies.
- 2.6 Key considerations in making this change include ensuring that:
 - (a) The Group's expanded remit does not dilute focus on climate mitigation and adaptation, but rather strengthens it through integration;
 - (b) Biodiversity and planning officers are supported in bringing relevant work to the Group;
 - (c) The new structure facilitates timely, well-informed input from councillors and supports clear reporting and accountability mechanisms.

3. Options appraisal and proposal

- 3.1 **Option 1:** Rename the CCWG to the 'Climate and Nature Working Group' and expand its terms of reference to include nature recovery, biodiversity, and other environmental matters. In addition, open membership to all councillors to attend meetings. (**Preferred Option**)

3.1.1 Pros:

- (a) Reflects the integration between nature and climate supporting a more holistic and strategic approach.
- (b) Enables structured councillor engagement with upcoming biodiversity and nature projects, improving governance, ownership, and oversight.
- (c) Aligns with best practice across other Surrey councils, ensuring consistency and potential for collaboration and future local government reorganisation.
- (d) Increases transparency and inclusivity by allowing all councillors to attend, promoting cross-party awareness and input.

3.1.2 Cons:

- a) A broader remit may require more officer coordination to ensure meetings remain focused and purposeful.
- b) Larger and more open meetings may reduce the ability to make quick, informal decisions without additional structure.

3.1.3 Why preferred: This option provides the clearest framework to support the Council's expanding environmental agenda, particularly as nature becomes a more prominent element of our statutory and strategic work. It enables better use of the Working Group as a non-decision making governance mechanism while strengthening political engagement and public accountability. The benefits in terms of integration, collaboration, and visibility outweigh the minor operational challenges, which can be managed through agenda planning and officer support.

- 3.2 **Option 2:** Retain the current Climate Change Working Group name and terms of reference.

3.2.1 Pros:

- (a) Minimal administrative change and disruption.
- (b) Maintains a clear focus on climate-specific issues.

3.2.2 Cons:

- (a) Does not reflect the growing scope of environmental work, particularly biodiversity and nature recovery.
- (b) Missed opportunity to increase councillor engagement and improve governance of upcoming projects.
- (c) Potential misalignment with neighbouring authorities and national policy direction.

3.2.3 Why not preferred: This option would maintain the status quo but limit the Council's ability to deliver integrated action on climate and nature. It would

also restrict oversight of emerging biodiversity initiatives and reduce the opportunity for early political input.

3.3 **Option 3:** Create a separate working group for nature and biodiversity.

3.3.1 Pros:

- (a) Maintains focus in both climate and nature areas with specialised groups.
- (b) Allows targeted discussion on technical biodiversity matters.

3.3.2 Cons:

- (a) Creates duplication of effort and risks siloed working.
- (b) Places additional demands on officer time and councillor availability.
- (c) May hinder integration between climate and nature workstreams, contrary to current best practice.

3.3.3 Why not preferred: This option adds complexity and undermines the goal of integrated governance. A single, combined working group is a more efficient and strategic way to deliver joined-up action on climate and nature.

4. **Risk implications**

- 4.1 Dilution of focus: Expanding the Group's remit could reduce attention on core climate issues if not well managed. *Mitigation:* Use clear agenda planning and a balanced forward work programme to ensure both climate and nature topics are covered effectively.
- 4.2 Increased officer workload: A broader remit and wider engagement may place additional demands on officers across multiple service areas. *Mitigation:* Coordinate meeting schedules and topic planning to align with team capacity and strategic priorities.
- 4.3 Larger, less focused meetings: Opening attendance to all councillors may lead to broader discussions and challenges in maintaining focus. *Mitigation:* Maintain structured meetings with clear agendas, chaired effectively, and provide pre-meeting briefings where needed.
- 4.4 Unclear scope or role confusion: Without updated terms of reference, there could be overlap with other committees or uncertainty about the group's function. *Mitigation:* Adopt a clear and concise terms of reference outlining the Group's purpose, remit, and governance role.
- 4.5 Inconsistent councillor engagement: While all councillors will be invited, consistent participation is not guaranteed. *Mitigation:* Maintain the requirement in the ToR for there to be a core group of members.

5. **Financial implications**

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications associated with renaming the Working Group or updating its terms of reference. Any officer time required to support the broader remit will be managed within existing resources.

6. **Legal comments**

- 6.1 The proposed changes promote good governance and wider engagement and input.
- 6.2 Climate Change Working Group Terms of Reference are contained within part 3(b) of the Council's Constitution. The proposed changes would require amendments to the Constitution. This Committee may submit to the Council proposals for changes to the Constitution (para 13.2(c) Article 13). Changes to the Constitution are approved by the Council after consideration of a report from the Monitoring Officer or advice from the Standards Committee (para 13.2(a) of Article 13).

Corporate implications

7. S151 Officer comments

- 7.1 Given that any officer resourcing impacts of broadening the terms of reference can be accommodated within existing resources and revenue budget, the S151 officer approves the changes.

8. Monitoring Officer comments

- 8.1 The Monitoring Officer confirms that the relevant legal implications have been taken into account.

9. Procurement comments

- 9.1 The proposed changes to the Working Group's name and terms of reference do not involve any direct procurement activity or changes to existing contracts.

10. Equality and Diversity

- 10.1 The proposed changes to the Working Group's name and terms of reference will not negatively impact any protected groups under the Equality Act 2010.
- 10.2 Opening attendance to all councillors promotes inclusivity and equal opportunity for engagement regardless of political affiliation or background.
- 10.3 Future projects considered by the Group, including biodiversity and nature recovery initiatives, will continue to be assessed for any equality impacts to ensure they support fair and equitable outcomes for all members of the community.

11. Sustainability/Climate Change Implications

- 11.1 Expanding the Working Group's remit to include both climate change and nature recovery supports a more integrated approach to environmental sustainability.
- 11.2 This change will help the Council better address the interconnected challenges of the climate and ecological emergencies, promoting resilient ecosystems alongside carbon reduction efforts.

- 11.3 Improved governance and councillor engagement through the Climate and Nature Working Group will strengthen strategic decision-making, helping to deliver long-term sustainability benefits for the local community and environment.

12. Other considerations

- 12.1 Relevant officers have been consulted on resource requirements, and they are to be funded from existing budgets.

13. Timetable for implementation

- 13.1 18th September: Environment and Sustainability Committee approval and refer to Standards Committee
- 13.2 8th October: Standards Committee recommendation to Council
- 13.3 October: Council
- 13.4 November: First Climate and Nature Working Group Meeting

14. Contact

- 14.1 Please contact Arthur Stokhuyzen (a.stokhuyzen@spelthorne.gov.uk), Climate Change Officer for any questions or queries

***Please submit any material questions to the Committee Chair and Officer
Contact by two days in advance of the meeting.***

Background papers: There are none.

Appendices:

Appendix A: Climate and Nature Working Group Terms of Reference