

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)	N/A	N/A
Relevant Group Head review	Yes	28/09/25
MAT+ review (to have been circulated at least 5 working days before Stage 2)	Yes	30/09/25
This item is on the Forward Plan for the relevant committee	Yes	26/07/25
	Reviewed by	
Finance comments		
Risk comments		
Legal comments	J Clare LH	01/10/25 10/10/25
HR comments (if applicable)		

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	10/10/25
S151 Officer commentary – at least 5 working days before MAT	T.Collier	3/10/25
Confirm final report cleared by MAT	Yes	21/10/25

Environment & Sustainability

Thursday 13th November 2025

Title	Voluntary Placement Stipend GIF Application
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report Author	Arthur Stokhuyzen
Ward(s) Affected	All Wards
Exempt	No
Corporate Priority	Environment
Recommendations	Committee is asked to: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Approve the project to run up to 5 'voluntary placement' positions for Academic Year 25/26.2. Approve the application of funding of £1,500 from the Green Initiatives Fund (GIF) to provide a stipend of £300/voluntary placement for 5 placements.
Reason for Recommendation	Running the internship programme was a success for the Climate Change Team last year. We want to expand the offering and provide a stipend of £300/voluntary placement to cover travel costs and expenses. This is in the interest of financial equity and was a key part of the feedback given by last year's voluntary placements.

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">• Last year's voluntary placement programme was a success, giving the Climate Change Team resource support.• It provides master's students with practical experience in sustainability and local government.• However, feedback from participants highlighted that the absence of financial support created a barrier for some students, particularly around travel costs and expenses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We want to expand the programme while ensuring that placements are accessible to all students, regardless of their financial background.• Providing a small stipend aligns with our Corporate values of empowerment and inclusiveness, while being a supportive employer.
This is what we want to do about it	These are the next steps

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For the Academic Year 2025/26, we propose running up to five voluntary placements. • Each placement would receive a £300 stipend to cover travel and expenses, funded by an application of £1,500 from the GIF (Green Initiatives Fund). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure approval for the spend of £1,500 to fund the voluntary placements through the GIF at Environment & Sustainability Committee. • The GIF bid application has been taken to the Climate Change Working group (CCWG) on 08/07/25 and has been recommended to the Environment & Sustainability Committee.
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2. Key issues

- 2.1 The decision to offer a stipend is primarily based on ensuring the voluntary placement programme remains accessible, fair, and effective in delivering both student development and support for the Council's Climate Change Team.
- 2.2 Feedback from last year's cohort identified the lack of financial support as a barrier to participation. A stipend for travel and expenses is therefore an essential adjustment to promote equity and widen access.
- 2.3 As with last year, placements will be offered in partnership with the University of Surrey, where an industry placement is a part of the Masters course.
- 2.4 Discussions with other universities were pursued but have not resulted in viable partnerships to date. For example, Royal Holloway university has decided not to run an industry placement module in the 2025/26 academic year.
- 2.5 Continuing with the University of Surrey ensures continuity, strong alignment with course requirements, and a reliable pool of motivated candidates.
- 2.6 The proposed stipend of £300 per student reflects the expected travel and subsistence costs over the duration of the placement:
 - (a) Students are required to work for 30 business days (approximately six weeks), in line with the University of Surrey's course requirements. This will be a hybrid working arrangement.
 - (b) A standard open return train ticket from Guildford to Staines costs £20.00. Over the course of the placement, they are expected to be in the office twice a week in line with staff working expectations. In addition, we are allowing for £5/day in the office for additional expenses. In summation, this is how we have developed our £300 stipend.
 - (c) The stipend therefore directly reflects the real costs of attendance and ensures no student is disadvantaged by financial constraints.
- 2.7 The proposed programme will offer up to 5 voluntary placements:
 - (a) Offering up to five placements provides the right balance between supporting student development and meeting the needs of the Climate Change Team.

- (b) Last year's programme with 3 placements demonstrated that students can make a meaningful contribution to project delivery, with each placement bringing a different skillset and perspective.
 - (c) The Climate Change Team was able to comfortably deal with the administration required with onboarding and therefore, expanding to five ensures sufficient additional capacity to progress a range of climate and sustainability projects without placing undue supervision burden on staff.
- 2.8 There are some process considerations that have had to have been made as this is a unique placement:
- 2.9 Payment: Stipends will be processed via a Request for Payments – PL3 form, with approval required from the Projects Team Manager. There will be two payments made, one halfway through the placement and the other half at the end in equal £150 instalments.
 - (a) Enrolment: Managed by the Climate Change Team. While there is no legally binding contract, students will be required to complete a Voluntary Placement Agreement form (attached as **Appendix A**), which commits them to follow Spelthorne Borough Council's values. If students fail to meet these expectations, their placement may be terminated, with reimbursement calculated at £50 per week for time completed
- 2.10 In addition, to be accepted for the voluntary placement they must meet the requirements of the voluntary placement job description.
- 2.11 Health and Safety: A risk assessment and relevant health and safety forms will be completed prior to the start of the placement, also found in **Appendix A**.
- 2.12 Monitoring: Student feedback will be gathered at the end of the placement to evaluate effectiveness and inform future improvements.
- 3. Options appraisal and proposal**
 - 3.1 Preferred Option – Option 1: Approve £1,500 from GIF for 5 placements at £300 each.
 - 3.2 Pros: Covers full travel costs, ensures equity, maximises opportunities for students, strengthens partnership with University of Surrey, provides team with added capacity.
 - 3.3 Cons: Higher total spend than last year (£0 per voluntary placement), more admin than a reduced scheme.
 - (a) Rationale: Best balance of value, accessibility, and capacity benefits.
 - 3.4 Option 2 – Change the number of placements offered at £300/voluntary placement
 - 3.5 Rationale: The Climate Change Teams deems any change to the number of placements sub-optimal as too few reduces the effectiveness of the programme and more would require too much officer administration.
 - 3.6 Option 3 – Change the stipend from the recommended £300/voluntary placement but maintain 5 placements

- 3.7 Rationale: The Climate Change Teams deems any change to the recommended £/voluntary placement to be not enough or too much.
- 3.8 Option 4 - Do not run the placement programme
- (a) Pros: No cost, no administration.
- 3.9 Cons: Lost student opportunities, reduced team capacity, reputational risk for Council and Surrey local government with Surrey and future students.
- 3.10 Rationale: The voluntary placement programme was a success, and it would be unproductive for the Climate Change Team and student opportunities to not run the programme.

4. Risk implications

4.1 Risk	4.2 Mitigation
4.3 Student fails to meet expectations or does not follow Council values	4.4 Clear Voluntary Placement Agreement; supervision by Climate Change Team; removal process with pro-rata reimbursement (£50/week).
4.5 Administrative delays in payment (PL3 process)	4.6 Payments processed via standard PL3 form with Projects Team Manager approval; Finance notified in advance.
4.7 Health and safety requirements not completed	4.8 Mandatory risk assessments and health and safety induction before placements commence.
4.9 Insufficient staff capacity to supervise 5 students	4.10 Limit placements to 5 maximum; clear work programmes; spread supervision across Climate Change Team.
4.11 Reputational risk if programme is not run or poorly managed	4.12 Maintain close partnership with University of Surrey; monitor student feedback; review programme annually.

5. Financial implications

- 5.1 The programme will cost £1,500 for 5 voluntary placement students who will receive £300 each upon completion of their placement.
- 5.2 The voluntary stipend of £1,500 will be funded through the Green Initiatives Fund (GIF)
- 5.3 Any officer time required to support the additional administration of onboarding and supporting the students will be managed within existing resources and budgets.
- 5.4 Stipends will be processed via a Request for Payments – PL3 form, with approval required from the Projects Team Manager. Payment will be made at the end of the placement.
- 5.5 After the approval and expenditure of this programme there will be £329,140 of uncommitted funds left in the GIF.

6. Legal comments

- 6.1 Legal Services have been consulted on the terms of the Voluntary Placement Agreement.
- 6.2 The proposed stipend intends to reimburse out of pocket expenses which will prevent creation of an employment contract and granting employment rights.

Corporate implications

7. S151 Officer comments

- 7.1 The S151 Officer is supportive of this low cost initiative, building on the experience of the previous programme. This is sufficient balance within the GIF to cover the cost if the Committee decide to finance from this source.

8. Monitoring Officer comments

- 8.1 The Monitoring Officer confirms that the Council has statutory powers under the general power of competence in section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 to incur the proposed expenditure and that relevant legal implications have been taken into account.

9. Procurement comments

- 9.1 There are no procurement implications in this report
- 9.2 Expenditure is below the £5,000 value that requires support with the Procurement Team.

10. Equality and Diversity

- 10.1 The Climate Change Team recognises the importance of ensuring that all opportunities are accessible to a diverse range of participants.
- 10.2 Feedback from last year's voluntary placement programme indicated that the lack of financial support created barriers for some students, particularly around travel and expenses.
- 10.3 By introducing a £300 stipend for each placement in the 2025/26 Academic Year, the programme aims to remove these barriers, making placements accessible to students regardless of their financial background.

11. Sustainability/Climate Change Implications

- 11.1 The voluntary placement programme directly supports the Council's sustainability and climate change objectives by providing additional resource capacity to the Climate Change Team.
- 11.2 Placements enable students to contribute to practical sustainability projects, building skills and knowledge that reinforce local climate action.
- 11.3 By facilitating participation through a small stipend, the programme ensures broader engagement, supporting the development of future professionals who are equipped to advance sustainability initiatives.
- 11.4 The programme also aligns with the Council's commitment to embedding sustainability and climate considerations across all activities.

12. Other considerations

- 12.1 All relevant teams have been consulted. HR, Legal, Data Protection.
- 12.2 No public consultation is required.

13. Timetable for implementation

- 13.1 Environment & Sustainability Committee: 13th November 2025
- 13.2 Advertise voluntary placements with University of Surrey: December – February 2026
- 13.3 Voluntary placements: March – July 2026

14. Contact

- 14.1 Please contact Climate Change Officer: a.stokhuyzen@spelthorne.gov.uk

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

Background papers:

Appendices:

Appendix A: Voluntary Placement Form