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**	**30/04/2026 10/09/2026**
Relevant Group Head review	**Yes**	**27/07/2026**
MAT+ review (to have been circulated **at least 5 working days before Stage 2**)	**Yes**	**11/08/2026**
This item is on the Forward Plan for the relevant committee	**Yes**	**22/05/2026**
	Reviewed by	
Finance comments (circulate to Finance)	**AS**	**05/08/2026**
Risk comments (circulate to Lee O'Neil)	**LO**	**09/10/26**
Legal comments (circulate to Legal team)	**AB**	**14/08/26**
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 rec'd
Monitoring Officer commentary – at least **5 working days before MAT**	**L Heron**	**15/10/26**
S151 Officer commentary – at least **5 working days before MAT**	**T.Collier**	**09/10/26**
Commissioner engagement	**J. Kingston**	**12/10/26**
	Delete as applicable:	No issues
Relevant MAT member sign-off	**L. O'Neil**	**16/10/26**
Report reviewed by Management Team		

Environment & Sustainability Committee

19th November 2026

Title	Green Initiative Fund application - Colne Valley Regional Park Trust - Recommendation from Climate and Nature Working Group
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report Author	Sandy Muirhead Group Head Commissioning and Transformation
Ward(s) Affected	All Wards
Exempt	No
Corporate Priority	Community Environment
Recommendations	**Committee is asked to:** • To approve Colne Valley Regional Park Trust (CVRPT) application for Green Initiatives Fund (GIF) funding for the sum of £20,000; and • Delegate authority to the Deputy Chief Executive to finalise and enter into the Grant Funding Agreement with CVRPT.
Reason for Recommendation	Due to national policy pressures and funding issues the Colne Valley Regional Park is at a crucial time in its role developing accessible and high-quality green space. This includes Staines Moor which requires enhancement/maintenance. The backdrop of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) makes it important for SBC to exemplify its historic commitment to the CVRPT amidst this challenging landscape, especially with the potential for Heathrow expansion and its impact on the River Colne.

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

What is the situation	Why we want to do something
• The Colne Valley Regional Park Trust (CVRPT) covers a significant proportion of Spelthorne (21%) and is a key strategic environmental asset. • It is facing increased pressure from development and wider national policy changes.	• To secure support for the CVRPT at a time of increasing financial and policy pressures. • To strengthen partnership working and support coordinated delivery of nature recovery. • To demonstrate the Council's continued strategic commitment, particularly in the context of local government change.

• The Council is seeking to award grant funding to CVRPT to support continued environmental outcomes.	
This is what we want to do about it	**These are the next steps**
• To agree the allocation of a £20,000 grant from the Green Initiatives Fund. • To strengthen joint working on biodiversity and green infrastructure.	• If approved, the £20,000 grant will be allocated to the Colne Valley Park Trust and secured by a grant funding agreement. • Outcomes will be monitored through key reporting metrics set out by the principles of the grant agreement

2. Key issues

2.1 The Colne Valley Regional Park (CVRPT) is a large, cross-boundary area of countryside to the west of London, covering approximately 110 km² across multiple local authority areas from Staines to Watford.

2.2 It comprises a network of farmland, woodland, rivers, canals, and lakes, forming a significant strategic landscape and ecological corridors on the west of London.

2.3 The CVRPT covers approximately 21% of northwest Spelthorne (including Staines Moor and Shortwood Common) and constitutes a key component of the Borough's green and blue infrastructure.

2.4 The Park includes significant biodiversity, landscape, and recreational assets, contributing to nature recovery, climate resilience, and public health outcomes.

2.5 Its cross-boundary nature requires coordinated working between local authorities to ensure effective landscape-scale management and policy alignment. This was recognised in a ministerial statement (Minister for Housing & Planning, 11/07/25):

2.6 *"The Government recognise the vital role that the Colne Valley regional park plays in providing access to countryside and green space for the millions of people who live in close proximity to it. We appreciate fully that it is highly valued by local communities. We also recognise its importance for biodiversity; as the hon. Lady knows, the park contains part of one special protection area, part of one national nature reserve, 13 sites of special scientific interest and seven local nature reserves. I assure the hon. Lady that I share her desire to ensure that the Colne Valley regional park is protected for current and future generations to enjoy, and I hope that I can reassure her today that the Government's commitment to delivering the housing and infrastructure growth that our country so desperately needs is not at odds with safeguarding the park for future generations."*

2.7 The Park is subject to increasing pressure from national and regional policy drivers, including:

(a) Revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), strengthening requirements for housing delivery and economic growth.

(b) Increased housing targets and land supply requirements, placing additional pressure on greenfield and semi-natural land.

(c) Heathrow Airport expansion proposals and associated infrastructure impacts, with potential implications for environmental assets and recreational pressure.

2.8 These pressures increase the need for strong strategic partnerships to support environmental protection and mitigation.

2.9 Spelthorne Borough Council has a long-standing relationship with CVRPT and has historically provided annual financial contributions.

2.10 The Council has benefited from:

(a) Specialist technical advice on planning, landscape, and biodiversity matters.

(b) Support in delivering nature recovery and habitat enhancement projects (including river restoration work).

(c) Access to external funding and wider regional initiatives, historically the CVRPT has been able to pull in up to £10 of philanthropic or private investment for every £1 of Council funding to improve quality and access to Spelthorne's natural spaces.

2.11 This partnership has enhanced the Council's ability to deliver environmental outcomes beyond its internal capacity.

2.12 The proposed transition to a West Surrey unitary authority presents potential risks to the continuation of the partnership, including:

(a) Reduced visibility of local priorities and partnerships within a larger unitary authority structure.

(b) Uncertainty over future funding commitments to regional partnerships.

2.13 There are recognised concerns from Members, officers, and CVRPT regarding the potential loss of this longstanding partnership.

2.14 The proposed grant will be administered through a formal application process. CVRPT has submitted a GIF grant application (**Appendix A**) setting out the funding requirements across engagement and project workstreams as well as alignment with Council priorities.

2.15 On 30th April the Climate Change and Nature Working Group (CNWG) approved the approach to enter into a partnership agreement with CVRPT with attached grant funding of up to £20,000. The principles of the partnership agreement were centred around collaboration, value for money and engagement.

2.16 After the Partnership Agreement was deemed inappropriate the CVRPT submitted a GIF grant application aligned with the original partnership agreement principles. The GIF grant application was approved CNWG, confirming the application shared the values and principles agreed by CNWG for this workstream.

2.17 CVRPT will be required to report works across two key streams. The first is engagement which will include requirements to:

(a) Attendance and participation in Staines Commons Working Group meetings.

(b) Submission of formal responses to planning consultations.

(c) Submission of comments on relevant planning applications affecting the Colne Valley Regional Park.

(d) Engagement with Local Plan implementation and evidence gathering.

2.18 The second stream will require the CVRPT to report on the key projects being delivered across Spelthorne:

(a) Number of projects delivered in Spelthorne.

(b) Capital investment secured into the borough, delivering a minimum of £4 of investment into Spelthorne for every £1 granted.

(c) Evidence of alignment with Local Plan policies and CVRPT objectives.

2.19 All activities funded through the grant funding agreement will be required to demonstrate alignment with the adopted Spelthorne Local Plan, particularly:

(a) SP5: Colne Valley Regional Park, supporting the protection, enhancement and promotion of the park as a strategic environmental asset.

(b) PS1: Responding to the Climate Emergency, through habitat restoration, climate resilience, natural flood management and carbon sequestration projects.

2.20 The proposed grant funding of £20,000 is to be funded through the Green Initiatives Fund. Environment & Sustainability Committee allotted £150,000 in capital expenditure for Financial Year 26/27. Due to ongoing internal financial pressures, it is unlikely further capital spend will be deployed. The finance team has factored in all funding demands from the GIF through to FY 2027/2028. Workstreams supported by the proposed grant are listed in 2.17 to 2.19 above.

2.21 The grant funding agreement will also include an assurance that CVRPT

2.22 It will secure a minimum of £4 external funding for every £1 invested by the Council.

2.23 This approach provides:

(a) Resource funding for local environmental projects

(b) Increased delivery capacity for landscape-scale initiatives

(c) Strong value for money for the Council

3. Options appraisal and proposal

3.1 Option 1: Approve the grant funding of £20,000 from the Green Initiatives Fund (Recommended)

3.2 Pros:

3.3 Strengthens the Council’s long-standing relationship with the Colne Valley Regional Park.

(a) Supports delivery of biodiversity, nature recovery, and green infrastructure objectives.

(b) Enables leverage of external funding (minimum 4:1), increasing overall investment in the Borough.

3.4 Cons:

3.5 Requires allocation of £20,000 from the Green Initiatives Fund reducing the level of reserves

(a) Commits the Council to continued partnership working, with associated officer time.

3.6 Justification: Provides the strongest strategic, environmental, and financial outcome. Ensures continuity of an established and effective partnership in relation to wider Local Plan objectives and restoration and maintenance of Staines Moor. Represents good value for money and supports delivery against corporate priorities.

3.7 **Option 2: Do not approve the funding**

3.8 Pros:

(a) No financial cost to the Council.

(b) No formal commitments or governance requirements.

3.9 Cons:

(a) Removes the formal partnership framework with the Colne Valley Regional Park.

(b) Loss of access to specialist expertise, coordination, and delivery support.

(c) Reduces the Council's ability to respond to cross-boundary environmental and development pressures.

(d) Risks loss of influence within the Park and reduced environmental outcomes locally.

(e) May be perceived as a reduction in commitment to biodiversity and green infrastructure.

3.10 Justification: This option provides no strategic or environmental benefit and introduces significant risks. Not aligned with corporate priorities or the Council's historic role within CVRPT.

4. Risk implications

4.1 Loss of strategic partnership: Without approval of the grant funding, there is a risk of losing a long-standing and effective relationship with the CVRPT. Mitigation: approving the agreement to secure continued collaboration and influence over cross-boundary environmental initiatives

4.2 Reduced capacity to respond to external pressures: Failure to maintain the partnership may limit the Council's ability to respond effectively to increasing development and policy pressures (including NPPF changes, housing targets, and Heathrow-related impacts) whilst ensuring and developing high-quality natural space. Mitigation: continued partnership working, enabling coordinated responses and mitigation of environmental impacts

4.3 Loss of external funding opportunities: Not providing financial support may reduce CVRPT's ability to prioritise Spelthorne and secure match funding for local projects. Mitigation: approving the proposed £20,000 contribution, which is expected to leverage external funding at a minimum ratio of 4:1.

4.4 Reputational risk: Withdrawal from or weakening of the partnership may be perceived as a reduction in the Council's commitment to environmental protection and biodiversity. Mitigation: formalising the partnership and maintaining visible support for the CVRPT.

4.5 Local government reorganisation (LGR) uncertainty: There is a risk that Spelthorne's role and influence within the CVRPT could be diminished during transition to a new unitary authority. Mitigation: establishing a formal agreement that provides continuity and a clear statement of intent.

4.6 Financial risk: The £20,000 contribution represents a financial draw down from the Green Initiatives Fund. Mitigation: relatively low value of the contribution and the expectation of securing additional external funding and measurable environmental benefits.

4.7 Delivery and governance risk: There is a risk that partnership outcomes may not be effectively delivered or monitored. Mitigation: governance arrangements set out in the grant funding agreement, including defined roles, regular meetings, and reporting mechanisms aligned with DEFRA and Natural England requirements

5. Financial implications

5.1 The proposed £20,000 contribution will be funded from the Council's Green Initiatives Fund (GIF), a revenue reserve which has been set aside, to fund, as its name implies green initiatives, and will be allocated to the Colne Valley Park Trust to support delivery of its core activities within Spelthorne.

5.2 This funding is expected to be matched at a minimum ratio of 4:1 through external funding secured by CVRPT, resulting in increased overall investment in environmental projects within the Borough.

5.3 The funding will support the delivery of projects that enhance the quality of green and blue spaces within the Colne Valley Regional Park and improve public access to these areas. This will support the work of strategic planning.

5.4 The contribution represents a modest investment relative to the scale of environmental, social, and economic benefits delivered, and supports value for money through leveraged funding and partnership delivery. To date the Council have paid a membership fee of £5k per year but this will cease with the grant.

5.5 The finance team has factored in all funding demands from the GIF through to FY 2027/2028. The GIF budget has sufficient funds to cover the grant and a request for funding at Ashford Cemetery Lodge for an Air Source Heat Pump (ASHP).

6. Legal comments

6.1 The Council has appropriate statutory powers to award grants and enter into the relevant contractual documentation pursuant to the general power of competence under section 1 of the Localism Act 2011.

6.2 When determining grant allocations, the Council must comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty, and in particular give due regard to the requirements in section 149(1) of the Equality Act 2010. The Council must consider the potential equality impacts of the proposals under discussion and ensure that all relevant equality considerations have been taken into account.

6.3 The contractual documentation must comply with all applicable rules and regulations and should not unduly incumber the new West Surrey Council.

6.4 The proposed grant does not amount to an unlawful subsidy under the Subsidy Control Act 2022.

6.5 Legal Services will assist in the preparation, negotiation, and the formal completion of the necessary documentation.

Corporate implications

7. Commissioners' comments

7.1 No comments from Commissioners.

8. S151 Officer comments

8.1 The S151 Officer confirms that all financial implications have been taken into account and that the recommendations can be funded from the available balance in the Green Initiatives Fund in line with the Reserves Strategy. Whilst this represents a depletion of reserves being passed across to West Surrey, the figure is not material, particularly compared to impact on potential outturn variance against asset rationalisation targets.

9. Monitoring Officer comments

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

10. Procurement comments

10.1 There are no procurement implications arising directly from the recommendation in this report.

11. Equality and Diversity

11.1 Positive impact through improved access to green space and associated health and wellbeing benefits

11.2 No adverse impacts on protected characteristics identified

12. Sustainability/Climate Change Implications

12.1 Supports biodiversity, habitat restoration, and nature recovery

12.2 Enhances climate resilience (e.g. flood management, cooling, carbon sequestration)

12.3 Overall positive contribution to the Council's sustainability and climate objectives

13. Other considerations

13.1 Strategic Planning Comments: Strategic planning was consulted on the Grant Agreement principles and were satisfied with the approach.

14. Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) Implications

14.1 Formalising the partnership helps maintain Spelthorne's strategic influence and ensures alignment with emerging unitary arrangements. See also paragraph 4.5 above.

15. Timetable for implementation

15.1 November 2026: Approval by Committee

15.2 December 2026: Grant Agreement signed:

15.3 December 2026: Grant funding issued

15.4 Ongoing: Reporting meetings and CVRPT delivery, with biannual review meetings

15.5 March 2028: Grant Period Ends

16. Contact

16.1 Sandy Muirhead Group Head Commissioning and Transformation

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 Green Initiatives Fund Grant Application Colne Valley Regional Park Trust