



Thriving Council Committee

Thursday, 24th September
2026

Subject: Review of the Environment & Sustainability Member Working Group

Report by:

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Executive Summary:

In 2025, following a Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge, Full Council resolved to review the organisation's existing Member Working Groups to assess whether they remained relevant, delivery focused, and aligned to corporate priorities. Resultingly, a review of the Environment & Sustainability Member Working Group has recently been completed, with a recommendation to close the Working Group. This report sets out the findings of the review, and, as required by the Terms of Reference, seeks committee approval to formally close the Environment & Sustainability Member Working Group. Provision has been made for the continued delivery of the Council's Environment & Sustainability Strategy through business-as-usual activity as set out in this report.

Appendices to Report

- Environment & Sustainability Working Group Terms of Reference
- Member Working Group Activity and Achievements 2019 - 2026

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That members agree to disband the Environment and Sustainability Member Working Group, effective from the point of decision.
2. That members note the ongoing arrangements that are in place to ensure continued delivery of this work area.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In 2020, the Council's Environment and Sustainability Member Working Group was formally established to oversee development of the Council's Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy; and to oversee delivery of the corresponding Action Plan. The Strategy was adopted by Full Council in May 2021, and refreshed in June 2024 to align it with the 2023 Corporate Plan and to introduce updated decarbonisation milestones.
- 1.2 Sitting alongside the Strategy is the Environment and Sustainability Action Plan, which has recently been reviewed and updated to reflect the 2026 Corporate Plan.
- 1.3 Throughout this period, the cross-party Environment and Sustainability (E&S) Member Working Group has met regularly throughout this period to steer and oversee delivery of the Strategy and Action Plan. As per the Council's Constitution, the E&S member working group has no decision-making powers and exists to provide an overview and steer. Formal decisions relating to this work area have, until recently, rested with Prosperous Communities Committee as the parent committee. Following the recent review of Council governance, this responsibility now rests with Thriving Places Committee.
- 1.4 In 2025, Full Council resolved to undertake a review of the Council's member working groups to ensure they remained delivery focused and aligned to the priorities of the Corporate Plan, which was formally adopted in March 2026. This report presents the outcome of the review of the E&S Member Working Group, with a recommendation that the group be formally closed for the reasons outlined in the report.

2 Outcome of the Review of the Environment & Sustainability Member Working Group

- 2.1 The review was co-ordinated by officers from the Policy Team, with close involvement from the Member Working Group, and in consultation with the Administration to ensure alignment with the new Corporate Plan and the priorities of the Council.
- 2.2 In considering the need for a Working Group, the review considered the new internal governance arrangements adopted by Full Council in March 2026; the existing workplan of the Member Working Group; the priorities of the Council; and the requirements of Local Government Reorganisation. The government's recent announcement (7th September 2026) that LGR is paused pending a review does not impact the outcome of the review of the Environment and Sustainability Working Group, nor the recommendations in this paper.
- 2.3 The Council's new governance arrangements are the main driver for recommending the closure of the Member Working Group. These arrangements mean that progress updates on the Council's key deliverables (such as project updates and strategy delivery) are considered and scrutinised through the new governance framework,

aligned to the Corporate Plan, negating the need for a separate Member Working Group. As such progress against deliverables relating to Environment and Sustainability are updated at the relevant Strategic Delivery Panel, and reported through the relevant Thematic Business Plan to the appropriate policy committee.

- 2.4 Neither the E&S Member Working Group, or the Strategic Delivery Panels have decision-making powers meaning that any future Environment and Sustainability policies, projects or grant funding opportunities requiring a member decision will continue to be presented to the relevant policy committee for approval in the usual way. Taking this approach means that officer and member time can be maximised on value-added activity that is aligned more closely to the Council's priorities, and to the requirements on the organisation in respect of Local Government Reorganisation.
- 2.5 A review of the Environment & Sustainability action plan found that much of the project-based work has either been completed, or has gone through the required decision-making process and is now moving into delivery. The remainder of the plan includes actions such as communications, community engagement, horizon scanning for new and relevant opportunities, and working with partner organisations, all of which can be considered business as usual activity which does not require specific input or oversight from the Member Working Group. It is considered that business as usual activity can continue in the usual way, co-ordinated by the Policy Team as part of its day-to-day activity and working with other teams across the Council as required.

3 Continuing to Deliver the Environment and Sustainability Strategy

- 3.1 The Environment and Sustainability Strategy was refreshed and re-adopted in June 2024. The principles and commitments of the Strategy remain of importance to the Council, acknowledging the uncertainties that exist around the future direction of LGR. Taking this into account, the current focus is on delivering those elements of the E&S Strategy that can be continued or achieved in a meaningful and purposeful way. This includes contributing to the delivery of the Council's recently adopted enhanced Community Grants Programme, which includes an element of Environment and Sustainability grant funding; and continuing to work with and support community groups in applying for external grant funding. One such example is the ongoing work to roll-out the Council's recently adopted Community Benefits Policy to ensure local communities receive maximum benefit.
- 3.2 Externally, work continues with partner organisations and with other Lincolnshire Councils to identify and progress opportunities. This includes policy development work linked to the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan and ongoing work with other Lincolnshire Councils to explore opportunities on matters such as community preparedness and resilience. Such work is an important contributor to the delivery of the Council's E&S Strategy.
- 3.3 Internally, support continues to be provided on recently approved projects relating to Council assets to ensure sustainability is factored into decision-making. The Council's long-established communications campaign "Small

Steps, Big Impact” will continue as an important tool in supporting residents and businesses to reduce their carbon footprint. Work is underway to enhance this communication and ensure maximum coverage through all of the Council’s contact channels.

3.4 More generally, horizon scanning continues so that any new and relevant opportunities can be brought to members attention for decision as required.

3.5 Taken together, this work demonstrates the continued targeted and purposeful delivery of the Council’s Environment and Sustainability Strategy in a co-ordinated manner that is aligned to the Corporate Plan and associated governance framework. The Strategy can now be considered embedded into the Corporate Plan and business as usual operations, with activity actively reported in Thematic Business Plans to the Strategic Delivery Panels and policy committees.

3.6 It is therefore recommended that the Environment and Sustainability Member Working Group can be formally closed, acknowledging the significant amount of positive work that members and officers of the group have undertaken over the years to progress the Council’s agenda in this area and to support residents, businesses and communities. These efforts have ensured that such work can continue and that priorities for the district’s people and places in respect of climate change and sustainability can be clearly articulated and enabled.

4. Alternative Options

	Option	Rationale for not recommending
1	To continue the role of the Member Working Group (i.e. ‘do nothing’)	It is considered that the Working Group has fulfilled its brief as set out in the Terms of Reference, with the Environment & Sustainability Strategy now well-embedded and with much of the action plan now being delivered through business-as-usual. As such, continuing the Working Group is not considered an effective use of Member and Officer time.

ASSOCIATED IMPLICATIONS

Legal: None arising from this report

Financial: FIN/77/27/TC/SL

In 2021, the Council set aside an earmarked Environmental and Climate Change Reserve of £500k. The current balance stands at £282.2k, which is uncommitted. The Council is currently undertaking a review of all earmarked reserves – the Environmental and Climate Change Reserve will be considered as part of that review which is due to be presented to Thriving Council Committee for decision in November.

Staffing:

None arising from this report.

LGR implications:

None arising from this report.

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights:

Not applicable in the context of this report.

Data Protection Implications:

Not applicable in the context of this report.

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities:

The Council remains committed to the principles and aspirations of its Environment and Sustainability Strategy. Activity will continue as outlined in this report. As such, the recommendations in this report are not considered to carry any inherent risks.

Section 17 Crime and Disorder Considerations:

Not applicable in the context of this report

Health Implications:

Not applicable in the context of this report.

Risk Assessment:

Not applicable in the context of this report.

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

None

Call in and Urgency:**Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?**

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)

Yes☐**No****X****Key Decision:**

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

Yes☐**No****X**