Place & Sustainability Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 12 March 2026

Climate Change and Nature Emergency Task and Finish Group Outcomes

Purpose	For Review
Classification	Public
Executive Summary	The Climate Change and Nature Emergency (CCNE) Task and Finish (T&F) Group received six presentations covering the council's current approach to responding to the declared Climate Change and Nature Emergency. The first of these presentations covered where we are now with climate action, and the following four sessions covered the programme areas – Carbon Reduction, Climate Adaptation, Nature Recovery and Programme Management – with Members being invited to feed into the priorities. The final session consolidated the feedback provided by Members and discussed a set of priorities across the four programme areas.
Recommendation(s)	**It is recommended that the Place and Sustainability Overview and Scrutiny Panel:** 1. **Notes the outcomes of the Climate Change and Nature Emergency Task and Finish Group.** 2. **Consider the Climate Change and Nature Emergency priorities as suggested by the CCNE Task and Finish Group and attached in Appendix 1, to provide feedback to the Portfolio Holder for Environment & Sustainability.**
Reasons for recommendation(s)	The CCNE T&F group has undertaken a detailed review of the council's current approach, with Member feedback taken regarding priorities across the four programme areas.

	Consideration and discussion of the priorities will ensure they take account of the views of Panel Members, align with the current context and position NFDC to deliver in the areas that are of most importance to the council.
Ward(s)	All
Portfolio Holder(s)	Councillor Geoffrey Blunden, Environment and Sustainability
Strategic Director(s)	Tracey Coleman Interim Strategic Director – Place, Operations and Sustainability
Officer Contact	Steve Garner Climate and Sustainability Lead 023 8028 5054 Steve.garner@nfdc.gov.uk Ros Carvell Sustainability Officer 02380 285630 Ros.carvell@nfdc.gov.uk

Introduction and background

1. New Forest District Council declared a Climate Change and Nature Emergency (CCNE) in 2021, with an action plan implemented the following year. This set out the council's commitment to achieve net zero by 2050 and to respond to the nature emergency.

2. The CCNE Task and Finish Group (T&F) was established with the following purposes, as set out within the agreed terms of reference:

    To develop recommendations for:

    A. Long term CCNE Strategy; and

    B. Short term action plan priorities for the council and New Forest area.

3. Members of the Task and Finish Group convened for six sessions to look at the work of the council in response to the declared CCNE. The first of these provided an introduction and overview, followed by a

session for each of the four programme areas, as detailed below. These presentations were split into two parts, with one part focusing on the activities of the council ("internal"), and the other part focusing on the wider New Forest area ("external"). The final session brought together the feedback of Members from the previous sessions, where Members consolidated and discussed the proposed priorities.

Overview of the Task and Finish Group Sessions

Session 1 – Where We Are Now, Past and Present Climate Action

4. The first session introduced the CCNE. Part 1 (council/internal) included:

    - What climate change is and its impact
    - The key drivers of our climate action (including legislation, declared emergency, Corporate Plan, Transformation Program)
    - The role of local councils
    - Introduction to the current strategies and priorities for each of the programme areas
    - Past and present action for each of these programmes
    - Stakeholder/partner expectations

    Part 2 (external/area wide):

    - The global context (including Conference of Parties, Sustainable Development Goals)
    - Area wide targets (including Partnership Programme, other local council climate change strategies)
    - Partnership working
    - Closer look at current/delivered projects (including Barton beach facilities, greener housing, Community Energy New Forest).

5. Whilst feedback at this early stage did not directly inform the priorities as set out within the Terms of Reference, several points were raised by Members during this session. These included the need for greater collaboration between agencies, the carbon literacy course for Members, the value that local parish councils can add, and the opportunity this represents to work more closely within communities on local projects.

Session 2 – Carbon Reduction

6. Session 2 was focused on Carbon Reduction with Part 1 (Council/internal) content including:

- What carbon and greenhouse gas emissions are and their effect
- NFDC's total emissions and a breakdown into specific areas/categories (e.g. fleet, heating, business travel)
- Fleet emissions (diesel emissions, Hydrogenated Vegetable Oil (HVO) fuel, plan for charging infrastructure, whole life costs and benefits)
- A closer look at our estate (utility bills, Strategic Asset Management Plan, achievements, challenges, opportunities)

    Part 2 (External/area wide):

- Sector emissions
- Transport in communities (data, adopted Local Plan 2016-2036, Local Transport Plan, Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans)
- Housing (Greener Housing Strategy, EPC's, Warmer Homes Grant, additional funding)

7. Feedback from Members for future internal priorities included continuing to focus on reducing fleet emissions. Encouragement was also given to continue implementing further carbon reduction measures across the corporate estate.

8. In relation to NFDC's external priorities, Members identified the need for the council to lead by example in influencing industry and partners through policies, leadership and our procurement of suppliers. Encouraging active and sustainable transport initiatives through the new Local Plan and lobbying for long term government funding to support sustainable transport was endorsed by Members. For housing, Members supported carbon reduction through its Greener Housing Strategy and to lobby for long term Government funding to support home energy efficiency.

9. Members expressed several high level or overarching responses for carbon reduction. This included support for sustainability and carbon reduction in council strategies, policies and through procurement practises. In addition, Members understood the importance of promoting local green skills development to support local delivery of carbon reduction initiatives, upskilling operatives and supporting apprenticeship schemes.

Session 3 – Climate Adaptation

10. Session 3 was focused on climate adaptation with Part 1 (external) content including:

- The Climate Adaptation Report
- Projected seasonal changes and sea level rise

- Changing demographics
- Key hazards (flooding, coastal erosion, heatwaves, air quality)
- Summaries and action guides
- Emergency planning response to climate change
- New Forest National Park Authority's adaptation report

  Part 2 (internal):

- Services risk assessments
- Member risk assessment

11. Members engaged in discussion on both the NFDC and NFNPA Adaptation Report and stressed the importance of flood prevention and urging statutory agencies to instigate preventative works. Discussion also centred on the importance of emergency planning and preparedness.

12. Members of T&F were individually also given the opportunity to feedback their understanding of climate change and their adaptation priorities, at a ward level and district wide, as well as the services of the council. At ward and district level the majority of Members felt that flooding was the most significant hazard, followed by heatwaves. When looking at these effects on the services of the council, flooding was again identified as the most significant hazard, followed by coastal erosion. Members also fed back on actions that should be prioritised to address these hazards, with the most frequent actions suggested including a focus on education and awareness raising and local resilience planning. Other prioritised actions included supporting existing strategies and floodproofing.

13. A wider survey was subsequently undertaken of all District Councillors who were asked to understand the probability and impact that they considered climate change would have on their ward in terms of the following factors: *physical aspects, residents' health and wellbeing, community resilience* and *their work as a Councillor.* Members were also asked to provide suggested mitigation actions. A total of 20 Members responded to the risk assessment. A summary of the feedback on the risk assessments is included in Table 1 below. This table shows what the majority of respondents felt the probability and impact of each factor was, and summarises the most commonly suggested mitigation actions.

Factor	Probability	Impact	Mitigation Actions
Physical Aspects	Likely	Moderate	Better drainage, digging out ditches
Residents Health and Wellbeing	Likely	Moderate	Education, protecting the young and elderly
Community Resilience	Likely	Moderate	Creating emergency plans, education
Work as a Councillor	Unlikely	Moderate	Communicate with and listen to ward Members

Table 1: Feedback from Member Risk Assessments

Session 4 – Nature Recovery

14. Session 4 was focused on nature recovery and started with an introduction to what nature recovery is and what it means for the New Forest. The session was then split into two parts with Part 1 (external) covering the following content:

- The work of the NFNPA (including site designations such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and RAMSAR, protected landscape targets and outcomes framework, indicators, Nature Recovery strategies and partnerships, Re:New Nature)
- Local Nature Recovery Strategy (how it will be used, process, timeline, engagement, issues and opportunities, mapping, potential measures)

   Part 2 (internal/council) then addressed the following matters:

- Local Plan (what it is, current review, key elements, what's in place, evidence to measure progress, possible new policies)
- NFDC ecologists (development management, ecological enhancements, recreation mitigation, local plan, enhanced biodiversity duty)
- Open Spaces (introduction to managed spaces and examples of work, biodiversity and habitats, constraints, partnership working, signage, successes, SANGS, problems/aspirations, work with other departments/service areas)

15. For New Forest wide areas, T&F Members expressed strong support for partnerships strategies and actions plans. Internally Members

responses included the need to increase biodiversity on Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG)/ Alternative Natural Recreational Greenspace (ANRG) land. Members also supported initiatives and projects on our own land such as the 'Let it Bee' campaign and support for tree planting in town and village centres.

Session 5 – Programme Management

16. Session 5 was focused on Programme Management which provides important structures and processes to enable and report on action. Members were introduced to what Programme Management is, the current priorities and objectives and achievements to date. Further content of the presentation can be seen below and for Part 1 (internal) included:

   - Communications (including the Climate and Sustainability SharePoint page, Climate Change Champions, future internal comms)
   - Governance (Review, addition of project and working groups)
   - Policy Framework (gaps in the framework)
   - CCNE report (what it is, most recent report, Overview and Scrutiny)
   - Managing risk (Climate change on the principal risk register and Climate change risk assessments incorporated in service planning)
   - Funding (sustainability budget, general fund bids, specific workstream funding)

     Part 2 (external/area wide):

   - Communications (public events, A35 project, Look Out For Our Forest campaign (LOFOF))
   - Data (used in the annual report)
   - Partnerships (examples of partnership working)

17. Member feedback from the Programme Management presentation included:

   - Importance of internal communications, and good and effective governance, and awareness of all funding opportunities

   - Importance of communication to residents and partners, accessible data and the power of partnerships.

Session 6 – Where We Want to Be, Future Climate Action

18.   The final session brought together the feedback of Members from the previous sessions, where Members consolidated their views on priorities. Members endorsed some proposed high-level priorities within the four programme areas. These priorities can be seen in Appendix 1.

Corporate Plan priorities

19.   This report closely aligns with the Place priorities in the Corporate Plan, by shaping our place now and for future generations and protecting our climate, coast and natural world. This report strengthens the council's ability to deliver against these commitments, as well as the declared Climate Change and Nature Emergency.

Consultation undertaken

20.   The proposed priorities were endorsed by the CCNE Task and Finish Group during its concluding session.

Financial and resource implications

21.   Approval of the recommendations of this report, to discuss and consider the work of the Task and Finish Group, has no financial or resource implications.

Legal implications

22.   There are no direct legal impacts resulting from this report.

Risk assessment

23.   There are no key risks associated with these recommendations.

Environmental / Climate and nature implications

24.   Adopting the recommendations would have a beneficial environmental impact by positioning NFDC to continue to deliver against the declared Climate Change and Nature Emergency.

Equalities implications

25.   The impacts of climate change disproportionately affect vulnerable Members of the community, and therefore adoption of the recommendations will strengthen NFDC's ability to reduce these impacts.

Crime and disorder implications

26. There are no direction crime or disorder impacts resulting from this report.

Data protection / Information governance / ICT implications

27. There are no data protection, information governance or ICT impacts resulting from this report.

New Forest National Park / Cranborne Chase National Landscape implications

28. Taking action on climate change furthers the interests of the New Forest National Park and Cranbourne Chase National Landscape, as it will would have a positive impact on conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of these areas, and helps to avoid detrimental environmental impacts.

Conclusion

29. The Climate Change and Nature Emergency Task and Finish Group has provided feedback on the priorities for the council's work against the declared Climate Change and Nature Emergency. Over the six sessions, a wide variety of feedback from Members was received, emphasising the importance in areas such as building resilience, supporting communities, working effectively with partners, and ensuring that the council's own operations were demonstrating sustainability.

30. The feedback from the T&F group, along with feedback from this Panel discussion, will be considered by the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability.

Appendices:	**Background Papers:**
Appendix 1 – Programme priorities as endorsed by CCNE Task and Finish Group	List documents here on which you have relied on to a material extent in the preparation of the report. Include links where possible.

Appendix 1 – Programme priorities as endorsed by CCNE Task and Finish Group

CARBON REDUCTION			
INTERNAL PRIORITIES		EXTERNAL PRIORITIES	
Fleet	**Estates**	**Road Transport**	**Homes**
Vehicles and Fuel Infrastructure	Energy Efficiency Renewable Energy	Sustainable Transport Plans inc. LTP4, LCWIP, Local Plan Lobbying for Improved Public Transport	Retrofit Sustainable New Development
BUSINESS AS USUAL IMPROVEMENTS			
Sustainable policies, plans, services & procurement		Net zero infrastructure, investment & engagement	

Table 2: NFDC Council and Area Carbon Reduction Programme

CLIMATE ADAPTATION			
INTERNAL PRIORITIES		EXTERNAL PRIORITIES	
Buildings	**Staff**	**Communities**	**Environment**
Location Risk Assessment Building Preparedness	Business Continuity Staff Education	Community Resilience Resident Education	Flood Resilience Coastal Erosion Strategy
BUSINESS AS USUAL IMPROVEMENTS			
Service risk assessment, plans & comms		Area risk assessment, plans & comms	

Table 3: NFDC Council and Area Climate Adaptation Programme

NATURE RECOVERY			
INTERNAL PRIORITIES		EXTERNAL PRIORITIES	
Biodiversity	**Stewardship**	**Biodiversity**	**Infrastructure**
NFDC Land Studies Habitat protection and creation	Planning and Open Spaces Strategies Maintenance and upkeep	External Strategies and data Habitat protection and creation	Green and Blue Infrastructure Built Infrastructure
BUSINESS AS USUAL IMPROVEMENTS			
Policies, strategies & decisions		Protection, enhancement & partnerships	

Table 4: NFDC Council and Area Nature Recovery Programme

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT			
INTERNAL PRIORITIES		EXTERNAL PRIORITIES	
Communications	**Governance**	**Communications**	**Partnerships**
Staff and Member Communication Staff Action inc. Climate Change Champions	Decision Making Funding	Public Communications inc. LOFOF Data Performance and Reporting	Leverage Shared Opportunities Connect with Communities Through Groups
BUSINESS AS USUAL IMPROVEMENTS			
CC&NE principles embedded in NFDC culture & services		Residents, businesses, visitors support CC&NE principles	

Table 5: NFDC Council and Area Nature Recovery Programme