

Appendix B

An Environmental Framework for the West
Northamptonshire Unitary Authority

West Northamptonshire Environment Task
and Finish Group

January 2021



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Background

Following a recommendation at the West Northamptonshire Shadow Executive Committee on 23rd June 2020, it was resolved that an Environment Task and Finish Group be established. The overall purpose of the group was:

“To develop and recommend a policy framework to ensure the new authority leads the way in environmental protection through its decision-making and service delivery”.

In order to deliver on this purpose, three key scope requirements were included in the terms of reference (included in Appendix 1) for the Group. These were to:

- Identify best practice in environmental protection and enhancement within local authorities locally and nationally;
- Identify areas in which the new authority can demonstrate environmental protection and enhancement; and
- Develop a framework which West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) can use to guide its decision making, policy development and service delivery in relation to environmental protection and enhancement, including climate change commitments.

Overall it was understood that once the purpose had been met, the Group would be able to recommend to the West Northamptonshire Shadow Executive Committee an Environmental Framework. This would highlight how the new authority can embed environmental considerations in its decision making. The framework would identify decisions, policies and services, which could all contribute towards protecting the environment and tackling climate change. It would also prioritise those areas the Group recommends the authority develops first.

This report meets the original purpose, by providing a series of structured recommendations under an Environmental Framework, and has been submitted to the Shadow Executive Committee for consideration.



Methodology

A terms of reference was created for the Group and is provided in Appendix 1 to this report. It sets out the approach taken to developing the Environmental Framework.

Five Members were appointed representing all current local authorities in West Northamptonshire, along with a number of Officers to support the development of the Framework. Monthly meetings took place, with the inaugural meeting on 6th July 2020.

At this first meeting, the terms of reference were approved and the agreed approach to future meetings was confirmed. Furthermore, Members were presented to by Officers to set the scene on current activity across the local authorities, including the potential services that interact with the environment and climate change, and some examples of other best practice across the country.

A set format was proposed for each meeting, to help structure discussions and identify recommendations. The main basis of this, was the use of the Centre for Public Scrutiny's document "10 questions to ask if you are scrutinising climate change"¹. The document provided ten questions included in Table 1 below:

How well does the council understand the need to take action locally?	How is the council planning to understand and act on the need to adapt existing properties and estates to address the impacts of climate change – and to plan for new housing stock which is resilient to these impacts?
How does the council's leadership champion and direct action on climate change?	How is the council promoting climate education, diversifying the labour market and focusing on sectors that are sustainable?
How is the council adopting a clear and detailed strategic plan, and how is it mainstreaming climate change mitigation and adaptation?	What measures are being taken to ensure that health and social care systems will be resilient with the extra pressures they will come under due to climate change?
Has the council reviewed its investment strategy, supply chains and procurement models to give due consideration to climate change impacts?	How does the council identify those who are most at risk from the impacts of climate change, and what is being done to assist the most vulnerable?

¹ Centre for Public Scrutiny and Local Government Association, July 2020. *10 questions to ask if you are scrutinising climate change*. <https://cfigs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/CfPS-Climate-Change-LINKS.pdf>



How is the council integrating sustainability and resilience into its transport and energy plans?

How is the council supporting and working with all relevant private and civic actors in the area towards climate change mitigation and adaptation?

Table 1: list of ten questions from the Centre for Public Scrutiny's document

The tense of each of these questions was rephrased so they were appropriately worded for discussions for the new unitary authority. These questions were then split into five separate themes, covering aspects such as culture, governance and decision making, partnership working, place and people. At each meeting, two questions from each theme were posed to Members, along with a number of sub-questions (provided within the document).

Alongside discussion on these two questions, and to help inform discussions, a relevant expert was invited to present on the theme of that meeting. Any proposed recommendations and key discussions were then captured in the minutes of the meeting and presented back to Members at the subsequent meeting, to ensure all views were accurate.

These recommendations and discussions have then been captured into this report in the format of an Environmental Framework.



An Environmental Framework for West Northamptonshire

The Environmental Framework provides a set of recommendations under a series of themes, which relate to key aspects and services of the unitary authority. These themes are:

- Culture and Leadership
- Governance and Decision Making
- Partnership working
- Place Services
- People Services

For each recommendation, an indication as to when these should be delivered by has been included. This has been categorised as either short term (within one year), medium term (one to five years) or long term (over five years).

The overall vision is for West Northamptonshire to be the 'greenest' Council in the country, building on some of the excellent work that has already been achieved throughout the region and expand on this to be a national leader.

Considerations

It is recognised that these recommendations will not provide the detail of how they should be delivered and as such this will be for the new West Northamptonshire Council to consider.

The list of recommendations is not exhaustive. Once work from the other Task and Finish Groups is collated and the new West Northamptonshire Council is established there will likely be further opportunities to expand on these high level recommendations. Therefore, this list should be seen as the foundations of which to build the 'greenest' Council in the country.

It also acknowledged that these high level recommendations have not been costed and as such it will be for the new authority to ensure they are adequately resourced or appropriate funding sources and grant opportunities are identified.

Carbon and emission targets were discussed and considered, however it was determined that it would not be appropriate for this Group to set these for the new Authority. Instead any targets should be agreed upon, in light of all other activity underway, by the new Authority as soon as reasonably possible.



Governance and Decision Making

Strong governance and ownership will help ensure the climate change agenda can be scrutinised, targets met, and environmental considerations embedded throughout the Council's activity.

Specific recommendations include:

1. The new Authority should immediately declare a climate emergency with a target of becoming carbon zero by 2030.
Long term
2. Create There should be a dedicated Cabinet Member portfolio for climate change to act as a champion for the new Authority and demonstrate political leadership on the issue.
Short Term
3. The new Authority should ensure there is ownership of the climate change agenda by a member of the senior leadership team within the organisation.
Short Term
4. The effects on climate change and the environment should be considered in any decisions taken by the Executive or Council.
Short Term
5. Executive reports should include an understanding of how the decision being proposed could impact the environment and support climate change action. This should be included at the *front* of each report.
Short Term
6. Utilise the findings from the recommendations paper provided by Northamptonshire County Council's procurement team, provided in Appendix 2, to ensure climate change and the environment is included within supply chains.
Medium Term
7. The new Authority should procure 100% green energy for its property portfolio.
Medium Term



Culture and Leadership

Clear leadership by West Northamptonshire Council will help to embed environmental thinking throughout the culture of the authority and the wider community. It will help create a firm foundation on which climate change can be addressed and new innovative approaches thrive.

Specific recommendations include:

1. The new Authority should gain an understanding of how each service area can contribute to tackling the impacts of climate change and what their impact is on the environment.
Medium Term
2. The new Authority should implement an Energy Management System and gain ISO50001 Certification to ensure its carbon footprint is effectively monitored and managed.
Medium Term
3. The new Authority should identify funding from within all its service budgets that contribute towards supporting environmental and climate change action.
Short Term
4. The new Authority should recruit a network of Climate Change Champions at both a political and officer level to raise awareness and galvanise action.
Medium Term
5. Training should be provided for Members, and Officers, on how the new Authority can support climate change action and the impact of its services.
Medium Term
6. Develop a regular communications bulletin for Members to keep them updated on how climate change is being tackled in West Northamptonshire
Short Term
7. There should be dedicated Officer support to help the new Authority deliver on its environmental and climate change actions.
Short Term
8. A clear strategy and action plan should be developed to show how the new Authority will resource and deliver its climate change aims.
Short Term



Partnership working

There is already a great deal of partnership working underway across West Northamptonshire, which has led to a number of positive achievements for the natural environment and climate change mitigation. The work already underway and the partnerships that are active should be encouraged and further work should be done to ensure the public are engaged in the environmental conversation.

Specific recommendations include:

1. Recognise the value of partnership working to tackle the impacts of climate change mitigation and adaptation.
Short Term
2. Continue to work with active climate change and natural environment partnerships, such as the Northamptonshire Local Nature Partnership, Nature Improvement Area and Climate Change Officers Group as well as other community groups to address environmental issues.
Short Term
3. Establish an open forum for public engagement on climate change.
Medium Term
4. Work closely with primary and secondary school pupils, as well as all other young people in West Northamptonshire, to engage on the impacts of climate change.
Medium Term
5. Provide a platform for children and young people to voice their concerns and ideas to tackle climate change.
Medium Term
6. Engage with businesses through existing urban and rural green group networks and encourage them to support climate change initiatives.
Medium Term
7. Deliver a virtual zero carbon conference to engage with local businesses and partnership organisations within the first year of the Council being established.
Short Term
8. Engage with neighbouring regional authorities to understand their climate change ambitions and identify any opportunities for cross boundary funding bids and opportunities.
Long Term



9. Aspire to protect and create additional allotments throughout West Northamptonshire to encourage sustainable community growing.

Long Term



Place Services

Place covers a number of services that can have a direct impact on the environment and help tackle the impacts of climate change. Transport and housing are two of the largest sectors that influence climate change. Strong policies and initiatives to tackle this could play a pivotal role in enhancing the environment.

Specific recommendations include:

1. Climate change requirements should be considered in the review of the Local Plan for West Northamptonshire.
Long Term
2. Prioritise applying for funding/grants to support climate change adaptation of existing properties in West Northamptonshire.
Long Term
3. The Authority should work closely with schools throughout West Northamptonshire to encourage active transport and seek initiatives to support this.
Long Term
4. Recognise the wonderful and varied amount of open green space in West Northamptonshire and develop a strategy to enhance, preserve and increase the amount of biodiversity across the region.
Medium Term
5. Climate change education in schools should be reviewed to assess the degree to which it is covered in the curriculum.
Medium Term
6. Opportunities should be sought to bring about a low carbon modal shift in transport in West Northamptonshire.
Long Term
7. The new Authority should develop business cases to bring forward further renewable energy generation and storage projects.
Medium Term
8. The new Authority should develop a tree strategy for West Northamptonshire to recognise the benefits trees bring to local communities and climate change
Medium Term



People Services

People services incorporate a wide range of activity focused on public health and social care. By ensuring these services are resilient to climate change and support environmental action, we can help support healthier communities.

Specific recommendations include:

1. A strategic communications plan should be created by the new Authority to raise awareness to communities of the impacts of extreme weather conditions.
Short Term
2. Work should be undertaken to identify those communities most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, utilising information such as flood risk and fuel poverty.
Medium Term
3. Research the different approaches to adapting homes for the most vulnerable residents to make them resilient to a changing climate and maximise the opportunities to implement these.
Long Term
4. The use of air quality monitoring outside schools should be considered to help identify hot spot locations that require activity to reduce the impacts of air pollution.
Medium Term
5. Seek additional opportunities to strategically align the Public Health agenda with climate change action, highlighting the benefits to health and wellbeing from enhancing the environment.
Long Term
6. Identify positive behavioural change action on climate change as a result of the impacts of Covid-19, such as the value of local green space and active travel, and ensure these are promoted and enhanced in the new Authority.
Short Term



Summary

This Framework for the West Northamptonshire Unitary Authority creates a foundation on which to build a strong approach to climate change and the environment, and ensures the Council has the right footing to become the 'greenest' Council in the country.

The Framework provides a series of high level recommendations that cover all aspects of Council life. However, the Framework recognises that this is a non-exhaustive list of recommendations and that there is a great deal of exemplar work, not captured here, that is currently taking place across the region by communities, businesses, the voluntary sector and the local authorities. This work needs to be recognised, celebrated and built upon.

It will be for Officers and Members of the new Authority to assess these recommendations, seek further opportunities to enhance these, and provide the expert knowledge and required skills to deliver on the detail behind each one.

A clear prioritisation method has been used, which should help the new Authority identify those actions that can be taken within the first year of the Council, as well as those that may require further detailed work before implementing.

Whilst the recommendations provided do not have associated identified costs it is clear that to deliver on these, dedicated resources will need to be provided, both in terms of staff and funding.

We hope the West Northamptonshire Shadow Executive Committee will welcome this Framework and recommend that this be adopted by the new Authority once it is established.



Appendix 1

TASK AND FINISH GROUP TERMS OF REFERENCE

West Shadow Authority

Environment
Purpose of the Group
To develop and recommend a policy framework to ensure the new authority leads the way in environmental protection through its decision-making and service delivery.
Description of the Task to be completed (Scope)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify best practice in environmental protection and enhancement within local authorities locally and nationally • Identify areas in which the new authority can demonstrate environmental protection and enhancement • Develop a framework which West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) can use to guide its decision making, policy development and service delivery in relation to environmental protection and enhancement, including Climate Emergency commitments.

Key Activities	Outcomes Sought
Identify and agree what best practice looks like	Inform how the WNC can practise environmental protection
Identify service areas and policies that can influence environmental protection and enhancement to a significant extent	Highlight areas where WNC can make the greatest difference to environmental protection and enhancement
Develop an Environmental Framework to guide WNC in embedding environmental protection and enhancement in its decision-making	The framework should highlight ways in which environmental consideration can be embedded in the WNC from the start

TIMESCALES	
Key dates:	First meeting: Monday 6 th July
	Second meeting: August
	Third meeting: September
	Fourth meeting: October
Finish date:	October (to be reviewed by the group)
FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS	Monthly

How will we know when the Task is finished?
The group will be able to recommend to the Shadow Executive an Environmental Framework which will highlight how the new authority can embed environmental considerations in its decision making.



The framework will identify decisions, policies and services which could all contribute towards protecting the environment and tackling climate change. It will also prioritise those areas the working group recommends the authority develops first.

Task Group Members

Chair:	Cllr Adam Brown (NCC & DDC)
Deputy Chair:	Cllr Mike Hallam (NCC)
Member:	Cllr Anna King (NBC)
Member:	Cllr Sandra Barnes (SNC)
Member:	Cllr Paul Joyce (NBC)

Task Group Officers

Enabling Lead / Lead Officer:	Graeme Kane (Executive Director, NCC)
Interim Statutory Officer:	George Candler (Interim Chief Executive)
Support Officer:	Helen Osborne, Project Support Officer
Topic Lead:	Phil Jones, Flood and Water Manager
Topic Lead:	Peter Baguley, Director of Planning and Sustainability

Any external Support or Input required

External Support / Input	Output
SME officers across the West	Best practice examples and list of policy/service areas relating to environmental issues Contribute towards the development of the framework
Sector experts	To provide advice and guidance to the working group about what best practice can look like.

Dependencies

Support and input from SMEs.

Document owner: Graeme Kane

Draft published: 6th July 2020

Approved: 6th July 2020 by the Environment Working Group.



Appendix 2

Document Type	Recommendations Paper
Programme	Task and Finish Group - Environment
Title	Environmental Priorities for Procurement.
Audience for this document	
West Northamptonshire: Task and Finish Group	
Purpose of this document	
The purpose of this report is for the Working Group to consider and agree for recommendation to the shadow Executive a level of corporate leadership priorities for procurement and contracting	
1. Recommendations Summary	
<p>The Future Northants Procurement lead has identified a series of recommendations for the Group to consider for driving environmental measures in the supply chain for West Northamptonshire Council;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Do Nothing 2) Mandate an “Environmental Benefits and Risks” section in all cabinet/committee papers. 3) Mandate in the Procurement Tender and Quotation documents the Environmental Strategies of the council. 4) Mandate a clear set of environmental standards that must be stated in procurement documents and subject to pass fail criteria. 5) Mandate Quantitative Criteria in Tenders. 6) Mandate Qualitative Criteria in Tenders. 7) Negotiate Changes with Existing Providers 8) Rather than purely environmental adopt a Social Value Approach to all of these recommendations. 9) Contract Managers Measuring these Initiatives Beyond the Procurement. 	

Document Control

Version History (please see version control guidance)			
Date	Version	Author	Brief Comments on Changes
07/10/2020	0.1	Gus de Silva	
13/11/20	0.2	Gus de Silva	Revisions



1. Background

The Head of Procurement for Northamptonshire County Council and Cambridgeshire County Council (Gus de Silva) was invited to present to the Environment Task and Finish Group the topic of the environment in the context of procurement. The presentation delivered focussed on current procurement parameters that exist today and the potential environmental measures possible for the West Northamptonshire Council.

There were many possibilities and ideas explained to the group and it was made clear that any of these proposals would require full endorsement from Members as a council priority to produce an effective outcome in this area. It was also made clear that these ideas needed to take place in the pre-procurement stages to ensure such initiatives are carefully thought out and prepared for in order for expected outcomes from procurement exercises to be achieved.

An action was taken for Gus to propose a suite of different scaled options for the group and wider Council Members to consider for achieving a greener council for its citizens. These are listed below for your consideration.

For all of these recommendations we need to be mindful of the cost implications. For example, outcomes concerning the recycling industry is incredibly complex and money raised from selling paper, plastic and other items may not even cover the costs incurred as the price for recycled commodities fluctuates wildly. The UK is expected to recycle 50% of all household waste, but government statistics show that 45.7% of household waste was recycled in 2017, up from 45.2% a year earlier. About half of councils' recycle food waste (compared with virtually 100% for plastic), but doing so requires an anaerobic digestion plant and larger, or extra, trucks for doorstep collections.

We must also be mindful of the UK laws that govern procurement for equal and fair treatment of bidders and relevance to the bidder's solution when considering evaluation.

2. Recommendations

Please outline the preferred recommendation(s) for the Board to consider.

2.1 Do Nothing.

The consequence of this is that other council outcomes will be prioritised instead and procurement can focus entirely on technical and legal compliance in achieving best value for money with no emphasis on environment initiatives. With government agendas and legislation on environmental issues likely to increase, and many council's declaring a climate emergency, this would be seen as a missed opportunity.



It is also likely that future government and legislative progression will mean the council will have to retrospectively address environmental initiatives to meet such new legal requirements as and when they happen. So there is a risk to cost avoidance to consider here. Many other councils are investing in green initiatives now and working now to 2050 carbon neutral targets so to do nothing would notably buck the trend of other authorities in England.

2.2 Mandate an “Environmental Benefits and Risks” section in all cabinet/committee papers.

This means at the council’s Key Decision threshold (to be agreed in constitution) any paper sought for approval mandate a section in the report template asking how it will meet with the council’s specific green initiatives and identify any risks. This will ensure any decisions have a focus on environmental consequences.

This could go further by having an Environmental Officer approve this section to ensure they are satisfied any paper has adequately helped the environment in a way that is aligned to the council’s priorities.

This is important for the procurement process for a number of reasons. It gives Members the opportunity to ensure it shapes this priority and it ensures environmental initiatives are thought through at design pre-procurement stage and not as an afterthought to the process. Note this section should be separate to any procurement approval section to cabinet/committee papers which should focus on the compliance and best value of any cabinet/committee paper.

2.3 Mandate in the Procurement Tender and Quotation documents the Environmental Strategies of the council.

Is the Council looking to move to more clean air by 20XX? Or encourage electric cars? Or set up a climate committee to review all solutions proposed to the Council? Whatever the stance, this should be included in the procurement and tender documents so it is clear to the bidders the type of council we are and where our priorities are. This is the easiest recommendation but we will need to be aware that this will in place exists should we change direction, update or remove the policy as this will be something our marketplace will read. As per the laws of public procurement any position needs to be relevant to the procurement so we should not simply share our policy. Rather we should state a clear summary of our priorities so bidders understand us as their customer.

2.4 Mandate a clear set of environmental standards that must be stated in procurement documents and subject to pass fail criteria.

The spend threshold for imposing these standards needs to be agreed and should be in line with our proposed Financial Regulations thresholds (note: I have not seen these). Drawbacks are we have to be careful not to alienate the market. Small businesses and low spend and one-off transactions might be discriminated from a high environmental standard imposed on bidders. Good to pilot this at a high threshold then gradually reduce. There is some risk with this in that lifecycle costing is difficult to assess so might not work on everything. So while this is an option, Procurement would



suggest an environmental team exploring a possible bar to ascertain if it can be applied in every procurement at a certain threshold.

2.5 **Mandate Quantitative Criteria in Tenders.**

Compile a shopping list of relevant green initiatives for the council which can be submitted to all procurements of a certain threshold. The more requirements on the list the provider can meet the more points can be scored in a procurement process. It is recommended to pilot this at a high tender threshold then gradually reduce. This will ensure more success by casting a wider net to bidders contracting with us. A piece of work is needed first to draw up and get agreement on all the environmental initiatives and weight importance in terms of their benefits to the Council. We need to ensure we are not disadvantaging small and medium businesses (hence the need for a threshold). Data asked for must be economically acceptable/viable for bidders to be able to produce. Have to explain calculation in detail so anyone can apply.

Procurement recommend starting with a high threshold then reviewing this later. The threshold should link to Council's Financial Regulations (I have not seen these) and a mandated % given to this Quantitative criterion.

2.6 **Mandate Qualitative Criteria in Tenders**

Mandate a minimum percentage on all tenders over a certain spend threshold to include criteria on the environment. The questions can be flexible to the requirement but the % mandatory and must deliver environmental improvements. It could be anything prescribed in 2.1.5. Procurement recommend 5 or 10%. This will mean 5 or 10% taken from price or quality evaluation but it will signify importance. Procurement recommend an environmental team to agree a suite of technical questions that Procurement can keep in a library for officers to utilise in this process. Questions could be on energy content and consumption related questions and whole lifecycle.

This could be piloted at a high threshold then gradually reduce. For example, if Bidder 1 wins a tender over Bidder 2 who was £x000 cheaper and they won by 2% to which 10% was down to high scoring in environmental criteria we must accept this outcome as a win. This allows more flexibility than 2.1.3 and the proposed questions should match what is explained in principle in the cabinet/committee paper of 2.1.2. If adopting 2.1.5 then the 10% should include the quantitative list.

2.7 **Negotiate Changes with Existing Providers**

This option entails drafting contract variations and negotiations to existing contracts to introduce measures for environmental benefits. Where the council has devised a policy in-house, extend policy out to its key suppliers through these changes. This will be the most expensive recommendation and while some bidders might already have the standards we seek or might want to change for the same agenda as us, many will want to charge for change. Procurement recommend not exploring this



option now but perhaps review whether they wish to at a later time given the cost and time spent asking each service area to identify then negotiate changes in terms and specifications for x number of suppliers.

2.8 Rather than purely environmental adopt a Social Value Approach to all of these recommendations.

Social Value is as important as the environment. The Social Value Act includes environmental measures and would be a missed opportunity to exclude social value from this recommendation paper. The Qualitative criteria 2.1.6 could be increased to 15-20% mandated because of the wider scope of benefits. This would negate separate interest in requesting a focus on social and community benefits in procurement. For example, 10% mandated to Social Value in addition to 10% environmental criteria questions. Many councils in England have adopted a single Social Value approach adopting 15-20% mandatory criteria on social value.

Expanding the scope slightly wider than environmental justifies the larger % because it covers health and wellbeing as well as environment and full lifecycle. This allows for use of local and sustainable exploration, apprenticeships and other initiatives which can also help support environmental goals. Central government are pushing Social Value centrally for January 2021 so this would keep in line with that agenda. There are also many toolkits and portals for Social Value that can aid with this. Procurement recommend making environment priorities wider under the banner of social value as a double win for the council.

2.9 Contract Managers Measuring these Initiatives Beyond the Procurement.

Consideration needs to be given to what happens after the procurement. If promises have been made and included in the procurement and committed in a contract, it is important that contract managers in the service area ensure these outcomes and benefits promised are met during the lifetime of the contract.