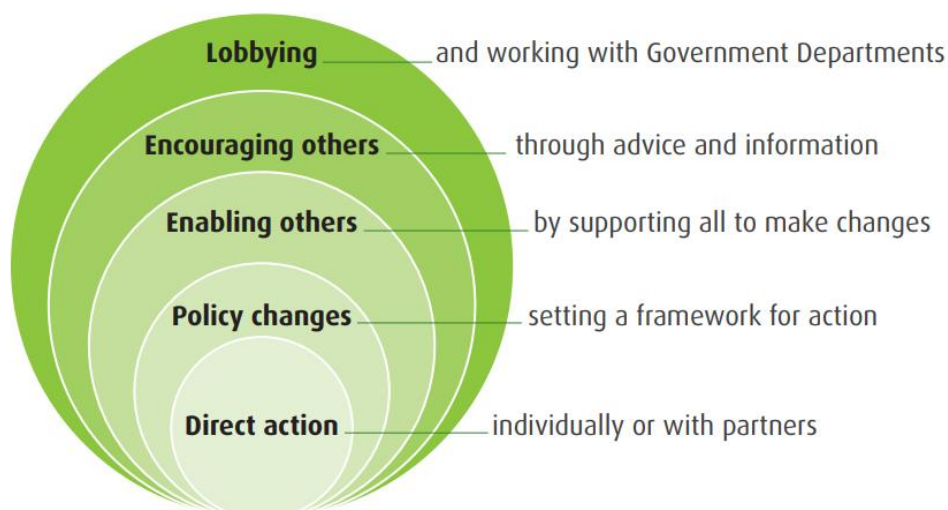


West Suffolk Environment and Sustainability Working Group – Terms of Reference

1. **Title of group:** West Suffolk Environment and Sustainability Working Group
2. **Purpose of group**
 - a. To review the progress that West Suffolk Council has made in delivering its action plans and move to Net Zero, and
 - b. To make recommendations to Cabinet on West Suffolk Council's future role in protecting and enhancing the environment, both in the way in which it carries out its operations and through wider work with West Suffolk's businesses and communities.
- 2.1 The review will consider how best to continue to embed environmental considerations into future decision-making, alongside wider social and economic factors and to develop a new more ambitious action plan to address both environmental, climate change and sustainability considerations. This will be brought together in an informed and considered action plan alongside recommendations for oversight of progress.
3. **Background**
 - 3.1 In September 2019, West Suffolk Council declared a climate emergency, having already established the Environment and Climate Change Taskforce (the Taskforce). The taskforce carried out research and assembled an action plan and recommendations to be considered by Cabinet.
 - 3.2 On 21 July 2020, Cabinet agreed the action plan, to implement the recommendations of the Taskforce, to be taken forward by officers and overseen by Cabinet. Cabinet also agreed to a review of progress against the actions.
 - 3.3 The last update was agreed by Cabinet in July 2022. The action plan is monitored by the officers of the Environment Management Group (EMG) following the framework set by the Taskforce:
 - Council consumption and accreditation
 - Waste and Recycling
 - Travel and Transport
 - Housing
 - Renewables
 - Environment and Biodiversity
 - 3.4 Further information on the work of the Council to date can be found here: [Tackling climate change \(westsuffolk.gov.uk\)](https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk) and each year the Council produces its [Environmental Statement](#).

- 3.5 The opportunities for West Suffolk Council to take action splits roughly into five areas as captured in the [Suffolk-Climate-Emergency-Plan.pdf \(greensuffolk.org\)](#)

Figure 3: Public sector spheres of influence



- 3.6 The previous taskforce focussed on direct actions and policy changes, and this new working group will ensure that the external opportunities are explored together with the shared commitments across Suffolk as set out in the [Suffolk-Climate-Emergency-Plan.pdf \(greensuffolk.org\)](#)
- 3.7 The working group will make recommendations to Cabinet on areas of potential future focus, in response to the evidence of current and future environmental challenges and existing activities.

4. Terms of reference (ToR)

- 4.1 To review the Council's progress on tackling environment and climate change to date to include, but not limited to:
- Progress against agreed action plans.
 - Scope and adequacy of existing action plans and opportunity to further embed net zero ambitions in all Council decisions.
 - Steps towards the long-term protection of specific aspects of West Suffolk's natural and built environment and enhancing the health and resilience of our communities when facing environmental threats.
 - Aims and delivery of the Council's £9m Net Zero fund.
 - The co-benefits of taking positive environmental action, particularly in regard to cost of living and health.
- 4.2 To **review** the Suffolk wide approaches and commitments including the [Suffolk-Climate-Emergency-Plan.pdf \(greensuffolk.org\)](#) and the opportunity to build on this in West Suffolk.
- 4.3 To **develop and appraise options** for:
- Updated actions the Council needs to take to be net-zero carbon by 2030.

- b. Updated actions the Council can take to develop a Net Zero ambition across West Suffolk.
- c. Updated actions to address the environment emergency and biodiversity improvements.
- d. Ongoing performance monitoring.
- e. Communications and campaigns.

- 4.4 This can include, but not be limited to:
- a. The council-wide policy framework.
 - b. Specific service areas or public campaigns.
 - c. The Council’s purchasing decisions, including energy.
 - d. Working with communities, businesses, partner organisations and neighbouring local authorities.
 - e. Understanding the role of the council to influence and lead behavioural change across West Suffolk.
 - f. How environmental considerations can best be included in future council processes, policies and decision making, (including investment decisions and the local plan policies).
 - g. How performance is best tracked and measured in particular the roles of Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Performance and Audit Committee as well as any on-going role for this working group.

4.4 These options will be appraised in terms of their deliverability, affordability and practicality, including their impacts and wider implications.

4.5 To make recommendations to Cabinet for how to take forward the preferred options from 3. above.

5. Timescale

June – July 2023	July – August 2023	By 01 September 2023
1. Initial meeting 2. Gather evidence from the Council’s Environmental Action Group (EMG) 3. Identify further engagement	4. Meeting 2- review progress 5. Undertake wider engagement 6. Draft recommendations	7. Meeting 3 – review progress & recommendations for Cabinet agreed by the working group. 8. Draft report for Cabinet

6. Governance

- 6.1 The working group will be cross party and consist of eight members. Membership will be broadly apportioned in line with the political balance and appointees from each group will be agreed by their respective group leader.
- 6.2 The Chair and Vice Chair will be appointed by the Leader of the Council.
- 6.3 Working group meetings shall be scheduled in consultation with the Chair and members will be encouraged to meet virtually or use green travel options.

6.4 Meetings will be 'paperless' where it is possible for Members to access the relevant reports and information online. Papers will only be sent to members when specifically requested.

6.5 The quorum level for the working party shall be four.

7. Access to Information

7.1 As a non-decision making body, the normal Access to Information Rules do not apply to the working group.

7.2 Officers should endeavour to make clear to members of the working group where matters under discussion are confidential and should be treated by Members privy to the information as such.

8. Officer support

8.1 The working group will be supported by a Strategic Director and the Corporate Policy Team, the Democratic Services Team and representatives of the Environmental Management Group to provide service information and updates.

9. Consultation and engagement

9.1 The working group will take evidence from Councillors and external stakeholders, including partners, stakeholders, community groups, residents and businesses as it considers appropriate.