

# Environmental Forum Refresh COMMITTEE REPORT

14/01/2026

**CLIMATE CHANGE & LEISURE COMMITTEE**  
**14 January 2026**

**PART I**

**ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM REFRESH AND TERMS OF REFERENCE UPDATE  
(DfE)**

**2.1 Summary**

- 2.2 The Three Rivers Environmental Forum has operated successfully for many years. However, since meetings moved online during the COVID-19 pandemic, attendance has steadily declined. Participation is now limited to a small number of regular members, which limits the topics discussed, actions arising and networks created thus reducing value for both attendees and staff.
- 2.3 This report proposes a full refresh of the Forum, including a new name, updated Terms of Reference, and revised format. The aim is to create a more accessible, inclusive, and action-oriented space for knowledge sharing, collaboration, and community engagement on sustainability and climate-related issues.

**2. Recommendation**

That the Committee:

- 2.1. Approves the new name *Three Rivers Environmental Network (TREN)*.
- 2.2. Approves the revised Terms of Reference (Appendix 1).

**3. Details**

- 3.1. The Environmental Forum has not kept pace with changing priorities or engagement needs. Attendance has declined, and feedback indicates the current format feels overly formal and inaccessible.
- 3.2. The Climate Change Team recognises the importance of maintaining a space where residents and community groups can engage with the Council. A refreshed model would better connect people, ideas, and initiatives; inspire action; share knowledge; and provide meaningful community input into Council decision-making.
- 3.3. The June meeting trialled a new approach, held in person at Penn Chamber and promoted via social media, the Greener Living newsletter, and direct invitations. The agenda (Appendix 2) encouraged discussion about what residents want from the space, preferred names, format, and accessibility.

3.4. Attendees were asked two core questions:

- *What do you want from the Forum?*
- *How should the Forum be run?*

3.5. Outcomes from Discussions

Proposed Names:

- **Three Rivers Environmental Network (TREN)**  
*(recommended)*
- Three Rivers Sustainable Community
- Three Rivers Community of Communities
- Three Rivers Environmental Partnership

Proposed Format:

- A hybrid programme of in-person and online events.
- Three themed meetings per year, rotating across different venues.
- Online webinars/talks in winter months or where accessibility is a concern.
- A communications hub for updates, campaigns, and best practice.
- Regular feedback loops on how community input is used.
- A platform to share success stories and measure impact.

Meeting Content:

- Standing items: introductions, feedback on actions, Council and community updates, event announcements, community motions/asks.
- Variable items: resident or group case studies, expert sessions (e.g. air quality, retrofit, food systems, biodiversity), workshops, and campaign/resource sharing.

Communications Strategy:

- Simple and engaging joining process.
- Use of social media (professional content, local promotion, short videos).
- Email newsletter via Greener Living.
- Promotion through local networks (schools, parish councils, U3A, youth and faith groups, residents' associations).
- Short video previews of speakers/events.

Inclusivity and Accessibility:

- Hybrid and online sessions to support those with travel or time constraints.
- Less formal meeting style (refreshments, accessible language, welcoming spaces).
- Rotating venues across the district to reach all communities.
- Ensuring all venues are wheelchair accessible.

3.6. As a result of these discussions, a new Terms of Reference has been drafted (Appendix 1) and will be formally presented at the Three Rivers Environmental Network.

3.7. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 18 November at Watford Rural Parish Hall, testing the rotating venue model, simplified sign-up process, and new communications approach.

#### 4. Options and Reasons for Recommendations

Option 1: Approve the new format, name, and Terms of Reference to revitalise the Forum as the *Three Rivers Environmental Network (TREN)*.

Option 2: Disband the Forum due to declining attendance and value.

It is recommended that Option 1 be approved, ensuring an ongoing platform for Council–community engagement while improving participation, inclusivity, and impact.

#### 5. Policy/Budget Reference and Implications

The recommendations in this report are within the Council's agreed policy and budgets.

The recommendations in this report relate to the achievement of the following performance indicators:

- CP50 District carbon emissions reported as tCO<sub>2</sub>e equivalent.
- CP52 Council Operations Carbon emissions reported as tCO<sub>2</sub>e equivalent.

A revitalised network will improve community engagement and collaboration, directly supporting progress towards the district's net-zero goals.

## **6. Legal, Equal Opportunities, Staffing, Environmental, Community Safety, Public Health, Customer Services Centre, Communications & Website, Risk Management and Health & Safety Implications**

### **Equal Opportunities Implications**

- 6.1. A short Equality Impact and Outcome Assessment has been completed (Appendix 3).
- 6.2. While moving meetings in person could present barriers for some residents, rotating venues across the district, maintaining wheelchair accessibility, and continuing to provide online sessions will ensure broad inclusivity. This approach supports carers, parents, disabled residents, and others with limited evening availability.

### **Staffing Implications**

- 6.3. At least one officer will continue to attend and support meetings. The move to in-person and hybrid formats will not significantly increase staffing requirements.

### **Environmental Implications**

- 6.4. The refreshed Three Rivers Environmental Network proposed in this report supports the Council and District to reduce emissions to net-zero carbon and increase sustainability across a wide range of areas through resident engagement, community support and behaviour change.
- 6.5. A sustainability impact assessment can be found at Appendices 4 resulting in a score of 3.3

Homes, buildings, infrastructure, equipment and energy	2.33
Travel	2
Goods and Consumption	4
Ecology	4
<u>Adaptation</u>	0
Engagement and influence	4

## **Public Health implications**

6.6. The refresh and continuation of the Forum aims to improve council communications with local individuals and communities, contributing to the prevention of deterioration of health and well-being issues arising from the consequences of climate change. Furthermore, improvements in Home Energy Efficiency through information sharing will improve environmental quality within homes and reduce energy bills, thereby assisting in reduction of financial anxiety related to household bills and benefitting physical health by improving the warmth and air quality within homes and preventing damp and mould. The Network will include topics connected to biodiversity, nature, and access to green spaces, all critical to maintaining sense of community and improving health and wellbeing.

## **Customer Services Centre Implications**

6.7. None

## **Communications and Website Implications**

6.8. No changes to the website will be needed. Agendas, notes, and meeting details will be published as before.

6.9. Communications will be increased to promote the meetings. This will consist of social media posts and digital display boards and will be done in conjunction with the communications team.

## **Risk and Health & Safety Implications**

6.10. The Council has agreed its risk management strategy which can be found on the website at <http://www.threerivers.gov.uk>. The risk management implications of this report are detailed below.

6.11. The subject of this report is covered by the Climate and Sustainability service plan. Any risks resulting from this report will be included in the risk register and, if necessary, managed within this plan.

6.12.

Nature of Risk	Consequence	Suggested Control Measures	Response	Risk Rating
The Council fails to act to reduce its' CO2 emissions	The Council <u>Net Zero</u> target of 2030, Corporate Framework net zero carbon theme and requirements of the Climate and Emergency Sustainability Strategy are unlikely to be met unless a coordinated programme of activity is implemented. And importantly the Council will not be addressing the Climate Emergency and thus will contribute further to the increase in global warming and its' consequences.	For the Committee to note and continue to provide a mandate for officers to progress the actions identified.	Treat	6
The Environmental Forum is not refreshed	Attendance continues to decline, causing officer time to be wasted, and missed opportunities to meaningfully engage with residents and community groups on climate and sustainability. Alternatively, the Forum is disbanded, resulting in the same outcome.	Refresh the Forum to increase attendance and engagement.	Treat	6

6.13. The above risks are scored using the matrix below. The Council has determined its aversion to risk and is prepared to tolerate risks where the combination of impact and likelihood scores 6 or less.

Likelihood		Low	High	Very High	Very High
		4	8	12	16
Very Likely	Low	Medium		High	Very High
	3	6		9	12
	Low	Low		Medium	High
	2	4		6	8
Remote	Low	Low		Low	Low
	1	2		3	4
Impact					
Low		→ Unacceptable			

Impact Score		Likelihood Score
4 (Catastrophic)		4 (Very Likely ( $\geq 80\%$ ))
3 (Critical)		3 (Likely (21-79%))
2 (Significant)		2 (Unlikely (6-20%))
1 (Marginal)		1 (Remote ( $\leq 5\%$ ))

## APPENDICES / ATTACHMENTS

Appendix 1: Revised Terms of Reference

Appendix 2: June 2025 Environmental Forum Agenda

Appendix 3: Equalities Impact Outcome Assessment

Appendix 4: Climate and Sustainability Impact Assessment



