

Minutes of a meeting of the Environment, Flooding and Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at County Hall, Glenfield on Monday, 9 March 2026.

PRESENT

Mr. K. Robinson CC (in the Chair)

Dr. J. Bloxham CC  
Mrs. N. Bottomley CC  
Mr. S. Bradshaw CC  
Mr. N. Chapman CC  
Mr. G. Cooke CC  
Ms. B. Gray CC

Dr. S. Hill CC  
Mr. J. McDonald CC  
Mr. P. Morris CC  
Ms. A. Pendlebury CC  
Mr. C. A. Smith CC

In attendance

Mr. A. Tilbury CC – Lead Member for Environment and Transport

22. Minutes.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2026 be taken as read, confirmed and signed.

23. Question Time

The Chief Executive reported that one question had been received under Standing Order 34.

**Question asked by Adam Stares**

“How much does the council expect to spend in revenue costs to pursue the 2050 Net Zero Action Plan in the 2026/27 financial year? How does this compare with the spending in 2025/26?”

**Reply by the Chairman**

The 2050 Net Zero Action Plan has been superseded by the Climate Resilience Delivery Plan which was approved by the [Cabinet](#) in February 2026. The Climate Resilience Delivery Plan is broader in scope (i.e. it includes actions linked to climate adaptation and mitigation, severe weather etc). The information provided below focuses on spend which would previously have been in scope of the 2050 Net Zero Action Plan.

For 2026/27, net revenue costs (where the primary reason is net zero delivery) are expected to amount to £0.31m and equates to 0.05% of the Council’s total revenue net spending. Compared to 2025/26, the net budget is £0.32m and equates to 0.05% of the Council’s total budgeted net revenue spend. The forecast spend for 2025/26 is £0.20m

(as per January 2026), which equates to 0.03% of the Council's total forecast revenue net spend.

### **Supplementary Question**

Mr Stares, with the consent of the Chairman, asked the following supplementary question:

“My interpretation of the answer is that there's been an underspend in this fiscal year of about £120,000. I wondered why that had happened and why that isn't taken into account for next year's budget if the budget remains essentially the same next year.”

At the request of the Chairman, the Director responded to advise that the underspend in 2025/26 arose from a number of things; lower than forecast differential between the cost of diesel and hydrogenated vegetable oil or HBO, staffing vacancies for part of the financial year and there's a small amount of grant funded income. These underspends were not reflected in next year's budget as the Council expected the cost differential between diesel and HBO to increase again in the next financial year. The Council also anticipated that staffing vacancies would be filled in 2026/27 and the external grant funding had now ended.

The Chairman thanked Mr Stares for his questions.

#### 24. Questions asked by Members under Standing Order 32 (1).

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been received under Standing Order 7(3) and 7(5).

#### 25. Urgent Items.

There were no other urgent items for consideration.

#### 26. Declarations of interest.

The Chairman invited Members who wished to declare any interest in respect of items on the agenda for the meeting.

No declarations were made.

#### 27. Declarations of the party whip.

There were no declarations of the Party Whip in accordance with Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 16.

#### 28. Presentations of petitions under Standing Order 33.

The Chief Executive reported that no petitions had been received under Standing Order 35.

#### 29. Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS) Update.

The Committee considered a presentation by the Director of Environment and Transport which provided an update on the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS) and the Authority's role as the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA). A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item '9' is filed with these minutes.

The Chairman welcomed Mr. A. Tilbury CC, the Cabinet Lead Member for Environment and Transport to the meeting for this item.

Arising from discussion, the following points were made:

- (i) It was noted that following publication of the agenda for this meeting, an additional 38 reports of internal flooding had been received from an event in late February. The Authority continued to gather data, support affected communities, and conduct investigations where required.
- (ii) In response to a member query on how the additional funding of £2m would be allocated, it was noted that the investment had supported increased staffing capacity and the retention of specialist expertise, which in turn increased the progression of Section 19 investigations, scheme design, community engagement and drainage investigations. The workload remained busy due to the frequency of flood events and the need to prioritise urgent incidents alongside programmed works therefore continued.
- (iii) Members acknowledged that the position was complex with multiple organisations being involved and having responsibility for flood risk management. Members welcomed the public information leaflet which had been produced including details of who best to contact when an event occurred. Partnership working, regular communication with other risk-management authorities and local communities, and the promotion of clear contact routes were emphasised as ongoing priorities for the Service.
- (iv) It was highlighted that the Authority had increased community engagement, including holding drop-in sessions, information campaigns and providing online resources to promote flood preparedness. Over 500 residents had attended engagement sessions during the previous year, which had been supported by partners from water companies, the Environment Agency (EA), district councils, and the highways service.
- (v) In response to a query on progress on Section 19 flood investigations, it was noted that while work continued promptly after events, final report publications were often delayed due to the need for technical validation. Members were assured, however, that this did not mean County Council works identified as being necessary from those investigations did not commence immediately. Efforts were being made to streamline the process where possible.
- (vi) It was noted that although Section 19 reports could recommend actions, the Authority did not have powers to compel external bodies to implement those recommendations. All internal flooding was investigated, with some incidents subject to informal investigation where thresholds for a formal Section 19 process were not met.
- (vii) It was noted that there were 140 enrolled flood wardens across the County. Regular training events continued to be delivered, with additional sessions for new

volunteers. Further partnership working with local universities were also being explored. New flood action groups had formed in several communities affected by recent flooding, and support was being provided to help them develop community risk plans.

- (viii) The Committee commented on the complexities around land drainage responsibilities and riparian ownership issues. The Director advised that public engagement work continued to improve awareness of maintenance duties. Natural flood management techniques were also being promoted where appropriate, particularly on privately owned land.
- (ix) A Member queried whether a further local assessment could be undertaken for the Sileby/Barrow area in Charnwood, noting that repeated flooding caused significant disruption and could leave residents effectively cut off in severe events. In response, the Director undertook to provide an update outside the meeting and to circulate to all Members further guidance on where community investigations might deliver the greatest benefit.
- (x) It was questioned, in the context of the County Council's role as Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) and statutory consultee on new developments, who held responsibility for other potential causes of flooding beyond surface water (including concerns about groundwater/water table issues affecting a local development). The Director advised that responsibility would likely sit with another Risk Management Authority but undertook to review the specific case in the Members division and respond to the Member about this outside the meeting.
- (xi) Progress on work to better understand flood risk in Hinckley and Burbage depended on ongoing discussions with external partners. A firm date for completion of this work could not therefore be provided at this time. Members noted that when consulted on local plan consultations and planning applications in that area as the LLFA evidence from Section 19 reports, local reviews and other relevant studies and sources of information would be relied upon as appropriate.
- (xii) A Member requested further information on the number of planning applications refused on flood risk grounds. The Director confirmed this information was available and would be provided following the meeting.
- (xiii) A Member sought clarification on the EA's asset map, asking about the difference between 'maintained assets' and other assets shown, and whether this indicated that works would not be undertaken where an asset was not listed as 'maintained'. Members noted that 'maintained' was likely to mean maintained by the EA. Other assets not so marked did not mean that no-one maintained the asset, just that these were not the responsibility of the EA, noting that responsibilities might rest with riparian owners.
- (xiv) A Member requested an update on progress with the Woodbrook scheme in Loughborough which officers undertook to provide outside the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation on the Council's Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and its role as the Lead Local Flood Authority, be noted and welcomed.

30. Biodiversity Report.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Environment and Transport which presented the draft Biodiversity Report, prior to this being published, as required by the strengthened biodiversity duty introduced as part of the Environment Act 2021. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 10' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were made:

- (i) A Member questioned whether work to monitor and improve biodiversity could be undermined if the Government introduced new initiatives or priorities, for example, by introducing new major growth proposals. It was noted that a substantial and ongoing programme of environmental legislation had been and was in the process of being introduced which placed duties on public authorities and partners which would suggest these responsibilities would continue for the foreseeable future.
- (ii) It was noted that the report provided a wider spatial framework regarding biodiversity beyond the County Council boundary and included mapping and evidence on habitats and species. It was intended to provide a point-in-time assessment with an emphasis on positive progression over the next reporting period. Members noted that an ongoing challenge would be ensuring major developments and partnerships demonstrated how they would meet the biodiversity duty and related requirements, to avoid delivery being confined to a single body.
- (iii) In response to a question, the Director reported that priority and indicator species were being identified, and recent recording activity had attracted strong community participation. On invasive species, Members noted that relevant colleagues (including forestry) monitored emerging risks and worked within national guidance and followed expert advice to track this.
- (iv) Concerns were raised about the level of the cultivation licence fee for parish councils wishing to undertake small-scale planting, for example, of wildflowers. It was questioned whether the fee could be reviewed. The Director undertook to review the basis for any uplift, including whether the fee was proportionate and appropriately benchmarked.
- (v) Concerns were raised about the cumulative impact of development on biodiversity, including the loss of green spaces and the removal of hedgerows and trees. Members questioned whether developments were being made as sustainably as possible. Members noted that developments were expected to address environmental deficits and deliver additionality, including the required uplift. Monitoring arrangements sat within planning conditions which could include the need to submit for approval a biodiversity gain plan setting out how a developer will achieve biodiversity. Site inspections on completion, with ongoing monitoring potentially linked to longer-term covenants might also be applied. Members were advised that further detail would sit with planning colleagues within district councils.

- (vi) Regenerative farming was a key delivery mechanism within the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and partners, including education providers and the National Farmers Union, were being engaged. Options for information sessions and broader audiences were also being explored, and further work with country parks would be needed to consider access and education opportunities.

RESOLVED:

That the draft Biodiversity Report be noted and welcomed.

31. Environment, Flooding and Climate Change Performance Report to December 2025.

The Committee considered a joint report of the Chief Executive and the Director of Environment and Transport which provided the latest performance update on the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that the County Council was solely or partly responsible for within its Strategic Plan to December 2025 (Quarter Three). A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item '11' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from the discussion, the following points were made:

- (i) District councils monitored both P10 and PM2.5 air quality levels. Whilst the Council's quarry works contributed to this, traffic was also a contributing factor. Members noted that the western side of Leicestershire tended to have higher densities of PM2.5 which was linked to the increased levels of industry, the airport and road infrastructure in that area. Members noted that for the Committee meeting in June a report would be presented by the Director of Public Health, Law and Governance on the Council's Air Quality Action Plan.
- (ii) Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure funding had been received to put in place 45 new charging points across the County. At a Member's request the Director undertook to provide more information on the location of charging points in Loughborough.
- (iii) A Member expressed disappointment that Building Regulation rules had not been updated nationally to improve the energy efficiency of homes. Technology was now available and the Member commented that it was disappointing that successive Governments had not addressed this over the years, particularly as retrofitting such technology was often very costly.
- (iv) It was confirmed that although data was not collected on sewage discharge occurrences, further information could be provided regarding the different types of chemicals and also natural pollutants being discharged. The Director undertook to provide this information outside the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That Environment Flooding and Climate Change Performance update to December 2025 be noted.

32. Date of next meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the next meeting of the Committee be held on Thursday, 8 June 2026 at 2.00pm.

2.00 - 4.00 pm  
09 March 2026

CHAIRMAN