

<b>Report title</b>	<b>Great Big Green Week: Summary of 2025 participation and involvement for 2026</b>
<b>Report author</b>	Dan Callaghan, Senior Climate Change & Sustainability Officer
<b>Department</b>	Planning, Economy, and Built Environment
<b>Exempt?</b>	No

**Purpose of report:**

In part - For information  
In part - To resolve

**Synopsis of report:**

This report summarises the Council's participation in the 2025 Great Big Green Week which took place across the UK from 7 to 15 June 2025. The report includes details of the events that were directly organised by the Council and those that were run by local groups with Council support, summarises feedback from groups/partners that were involved in these events, and reflects on key learnings from this year's Great Big Green Week.

The report also seeks Committee agreement on the level of participation desired from the Council during the 2026 Great Big Green Week, subject to sufficient funding being secured.

**Recommendation(s):**

Corporate Management Committee is asked to:

1. **NOTE** the information provided and feedback received on the Council's participation during the 2025 Great Big Green Week
2. **AGREE** the level of involvement that the Council should have during the 2026 Great Big Green Week. The options for involvement are as follows:

Option 1: Support and promote.

Option 2: Support, promote and co-ordinate.

Option 3: Support, promote, co-ordinate and provide assistance.

Option 4: Support, promote, co-ordinate, provide assistance and participate

## **1. Context and background of report**

- 1.1 The Corporate Business Plan 2022-2026 sets out how the Council will play a key role in creating a greener environment and ensuring an effective response to climate change. The Climate Change Strategy 2022-2030, adopted in October 2022, describes how the Council will approach this and sets out Runnymede's 2030 climate vision: how the Council intends that all its operations will be carbon 'net zero' by 2030. The Strategy also sets out how the Council will work with local community groups and a range of other stakeholders to reach net zero carbon emissions across the wider borough by 2050, in line with national targets.
- 1.2 At Full Council on 7 December 2023, Runnymede Borough Council resolved to declare a climate emergency. In declaring a climate emergency, the Council will use its reasonable endeavours to continue its work to meet the Council's target of net zero operational emissions by 2030, and to use its sphere of influence to support the Borough and its communities to achieve the 2050 national net zero target for the UK.
- 1.3 To support the Council's net zero targets, a Climate Change and Nature Action Plan has been produced, initially adopted at Full Council on 29 February 2024 then reviewed and updated for approval by Corporate Management Committee on 10 April 2025. Action ID 8.2 states that the Council will "Work with our partners and communities to encourage positive behavioural changes, supported by annual communications plans, which co-ordinate priorities and campaigns". Action ID 8.2.2 states that the Council will "Participate in external events throughout the year such as the Great Big Green Week".
- 1.4 Since 2021, the UK registered charity the Climate Movement, under the operating name the Climate Coalition, has organised an annual Great Big Green Week (GBGW) where local groups and organisations across the country are encouraged to run community events split between Local Green Weeks across the country to celebrate how communities are taking action to tackle climate change and protect green spaces.
- 1.5 At Corporate Management Committee on 26 September 2024, the Council agreed to support, promote, co-ordinate, provide assistance and participate (option 4) in the 2025 Great Big Green Week.

## **2. Report and, where applicable, options considered and recommended.**

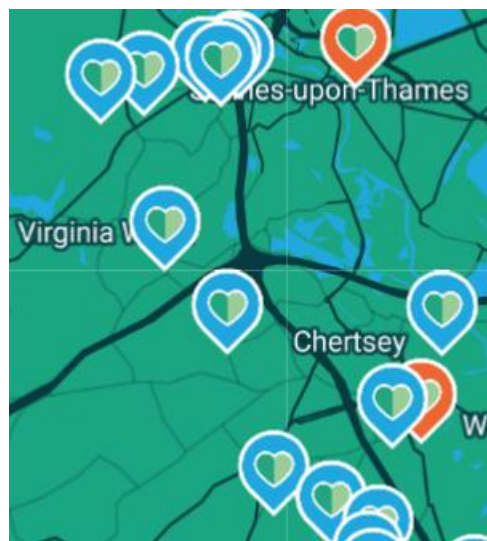
- 2.1 This section is split into two parts. The first considers the Council's involvement in the 2025 Great Big Green Week, reflecting on the events organised and their intended outcomes, assessing whether intended outcomes were achieved, setting out any lessons learnt, and summarising feedback from groups across the borough that engaged in the Great Big Green Week.
- 2.2 The second part of this section of the report considers the 2026 Great Big Green Week and the different options for involvement. Officers request that the Committee confirms the level of involvement that it would like to see from the Council next year, subject to the available funding being secured.

### Great Big Green Week 2025: Participation summary and feedback

- 2.3 In 2025, the Great Big Green Week ran between the 7th and 15th June with the intention to build on the successes of the previous three years. Runnymede Borough Council coordinated a Local Green Week through the Great Big Green Week website, organised a series of events consistent with the ethos of the initiative and encouraged other local organisations to run their own events. Events were spread around the borough geographically and involved a range of contributors. The intention was to create a diverse

portfolio of events which had the potential to appeal to a large cross-section of the local population and maximise engagement. Following Great Big Green Week 2024 which had a strong focus on engaging community groups to take part, 2025 sought to further extend the reach of the initiative by focussing internally on Council staff as a priority group, whilst continuing to engage across the borough as in previous years.

- 2.4 Local events that were open to the public were publicised on the Council's website, uploaded to the Great Big Green Week website linked to the Runnymede Local Green Week, and publicised on social media. Following technical issues with the Great Big Green Week website events pages in previous years, for 2025 these have been rectified and the 'Find an event' function improved with the introduction of a new map graphic which shows events across a geographical area. A view of this map from the Great Big Green Week website with the location of events in Runnymede is available in Figure 1 (blue markers show individual events, and red markers show a Local Green Week portfolio of events).



*Figure 1: Map of Runnymede showing the location of events (blue) and local green weeks (red) organised for Great Big Green Week 2025.*

- 2.5 In total across Runnymede approximately 30 individual events were uploaded to the Great Big Green Week website and linked to the Runnymede Local Green Week. Some of these occurred as a single event on a single day, with others running multiple events over the same day or multiple days. However, the events added to the website were only those open to the public which we sought to advertise. Reviewing information about 'closed' events run by local organisations and the Council, there were over 50 events that took place across Runnymede as part of Great Big Green Week. Please see paragraphs 2.22 and 2.23 for further information on these events.
- 2.6 Events delivered or funded by the Council, along with a summary of events run by local organisations with Council support, are set out below.

#### 'Our Beautiful Borough' Nature and Wildlife Photography Competition

- 2.7 The Council re-ran the 'Our Beautiful Borough' Nature and Wildlife Photography Competition from 7 April to 1 June 2025 as a lead-in event to Great Big Green Week. It was asked that entrants submit a maximum of 3 photos directly to the Council's climate change inbox via email, and the competition was open to everyone with the only condition that the photo had to be taken in the borough of Runnymede across two categories of 'Under 18' and '18 & over'. The event was publicised by the Council on its website, across social media platforms

including a paid campaign on Instagram, in Runnymede Life magazine, and directly with local community groups, camera clubs, and schools.

- 2.8 A total of 86 photos (76 photos in the '18 & over' category and 10 photos in the 'Under 18' category) from 31 entrants were received from across the borough. 14 more photos were submitted than in 2024 and the total number of entrants for 2025 was the same as 2024. There were more than double the quantity of photographs submitted in the '18 & over' category which has been attributed to the paid Instagram campaign, which received a strong level of engagement and led to an immediate uptick in visits to the 'Our Beautiful Borough' page on the Council website. Engagement with the 'Under 18' category was lower than 2024, however there was one school (St Cuthbert's in Englefield Green) that ran the competition internally, with around 130 entrants, and then submitted the winning entry for the borough competition. This provides a valuable insight on how the competition could be run for young people in future years to boost entries and participation. The teacher who ran the competition at St Cuthbert's said "We had some wonderful entries, and it encouraged so many of the children to spend time with nature and appreciate the environment. There was a brilliant buzz in school about it".
- 2.9 Officers collated the images received and these were judged by the Council's Biodiversity Officer and the Mayor of Runnymede. There was also due to be a professional photographer supporting judging who was unable to attend. Following judging, one winner and one highly commended entry were selected in the 'Under 18' category, and one winner and three highly commended entries in the '18 & over' category. All 6 of these photos have been printed on canvas and are on display outside the Council chamber at the Runnymede Civic Centre (the photos from 2024 have been moved to an alternative location in the Civic Centre). A short video of the winning entries has also been created and posted across the Council's social media and uploaded to the Council's website. Additionally, all winning and highly commended photographers were invited to a meet and greet event with the Mayor of Runnymede to see their photographs in-situ, sign them, and receive a framed certificate. 4 of the 6 entrants were able to attend, as did the teacher from St Cuthbert's responsible for the internal running of the competition at the school. The winning entrant in each category also received a £50 gift voucher for the Social Supermarket, an online shop connecting buyers with social enterprises making a positive difference to the world.

#### Brickies Club Environmental Workshops in Local Schools

- 2.10 Following the very positive feedback from schools about the Brickies Club environmental workshops funded by the Council during Great Big Green Week 2023 and 2024, the Council partnered again with Brickies Club in 2025 to run sustainability themed workshops at primary schools during Great Big Green Week. These involves a short presentation on climate change and its impacts, and why we need to act and how we can act, all tied into the Great Big Green Week 2025 theme of 'Let's Swap Together for Good', highlighting swaps that could be made to promote a more sustainable future. The presentation was followed by a building challenge using Lego elements where, in pairs, students built their dream eco-school with key sustainable features, such as solar panels, roof gardens, and biodiversity areas.
- 2.11 Officers were able to engage with schools on this initiative in late 2024 following CMC approval being given in September 2024 for Council participation in the 2025 Great Big Green Week. This early approval and an initial pot of £1500 funding from the Surrey Your Councillor Community Fund were crucial to engage schools and build interest in the initiative and gave plenty of time for schools to consider their involvement in the workshops, working this into their forward planning for the year ahead. 13 primary schools (+7 compared to 2024) from across the borough expressed an interest in being involved and officers were able to utilise both the Your Councillor Community Fund grant and the Council's Youth

Development Fund to secure £6750 towards delivering these workshops. All 13 schools expressing an interest were therefore able to engage in this initiative, which was delivered to an estimated 1530 students from Year 1 to Year 6 across the month of June. The Senior Climate Change and Sustainability Officer, Mayor of Runnymede, and Councillor Robert King (who provided funding for the initiatives through the Your Councillor Community Fund) attended workshops in several schools across the duration of the initiative. The schools engaged are listed below:

- Pyrcroft Grange Primary School (Chertsey): 4 workshops delivered to 120 students.
- St Jude's Junior School (Englefield Green): 3 workshops delivered to 90 students.
- The Grange Community Infant School (New Haw): 4 workshops delivered to 120 students.
- New Haw Junior School (New Haw): 4 workshops delivered to 120 students.
- St Anne's Catholic School (Chertsey): 4 workshops delivered to 120 students.
- Ongar Place Primary School (Addlestone): 4 workshops delivered to 120 students.
- St Cuthbert's Catholic Primary School (Englefield Green): 4 workshops delivered to 120 students.
- Holy Family Catholic Primary School (Addlestone): 4 workshops delivered to 120 students.
- Sayes Court Primary School (Addlestone): 4 workshops delivered to 120 students.
- Ottershaw CofE School (Ottershaw): 4 workshops delivered to 120 students.
- St Paul's CofE Primary School (Addlestone): 4 workshops delivered to 120 students.
- The Hythe Community Primary School (Egham Hythe): 4 workshops delivered to 120 students.
- St Anns Heath Junior School (Virginia Water): 4 workshops delivered to 120 students.

2.12 Following delivery of the workshops, a Microsoft Form survey was sent to each participating school for feedback on the Brickies workshops. 8 of the 13 participating schools responded to the survey, the results from which are summarised below:

- All respondents rated the workshops a **5-star**.
- All respondents selected '**Strongly Agree**' to the statement "The climate change overview and background provided a good introduction to the activity".
- All respondents selected '**Strongly Agree**' to the statement "We have had positive feedback from students and/or teachers on the workshops".
- All respondents selected '**Strongly Agree**' to the statement "Our students enjoyed taking part in the workshop".
- All respondents selected '**Strongly Agree**' to the statement "We would like to take part in these workshops again in the future".

2.13 Participating schools were asked if they had any further feedback on the workshops. The below are three of these statements that demonstrate the engaging and positive impact of the workshops for exploring climate change and sustainability topics:

- *"Jamie has such a lovely way when engaging with the children and as a result, the workshops were so inclusive for all of our children, including those from the COIN Centre. We would love to take part in the workshops again and find a way for all classes in the school to take part in the Brickies workshops next year."*
- *"I don't think anything could be improved. It went brilliantly and all staff relayed back how much the children enjoyed it. It allowed our children who struggle in an academic setting to thrive. Adults have actually enquired about whether we could get the Brickies team back to run a club! The mayor came to visit one of the workshops also and it was*

*an absolute pleasure, the children really enjoyed it and it created a great buzz around school.”*

- *“What a wonderful experience. Jamie from Brickies was great! It was lovely to see that 120 children were all engaged and managed to achieve such wonderful builds. The themes were great and educational. The Mayor visit made our day extra special and we would always welcome her back. She was wonderful with the children and took such an active interest in our school”.*

- 2.14 As part of the survey, all schools were asked if they had run any other initiatives as part of Great Big Green Week. Four schools that responded to the survey had been involved in other activities related to climate change and sustainability, including themed days (Meat Free Monday, Thrifty Tuesday, Wildlife Wednesday), book swaps, making bird feeders, litter picking, and sharing ideas for promoting sustainability within the school.
- 2.15 The final question of the survey asked if schools were working on any other environmental initiatives that the Council may be able to support. Details of several initiatives have been provided. Officers will work through this list and engage with the individual schools as required to ensure that a strong relationship is built with these schools and engagement maintained.
- 2.16 Given the very positive feedback received from all those engaging in the initiative and the significant and continued expansion in the initiative, it is hoped that the Brickies workshops can be retained for 2026 with the ambition to once again expand delivery of workshops in schools. However, this remains subject to securing the required funding for the level of interest expressed.

#### Staff Events during Great Big Green Week

- 2.17 As mentioned in paragraph 2.3, there was a particular focus on promoting and running events for Council staff during Great Big Green Week 2025, recognising that this is a group that the Council has a strong potential to involve in activities throughout the week. Eight activities were organised for staff to get involved with climate action and protecting nature, and these were a mix of hour-long events, half or full-day events, or multi-day activities. These were communicated to staff using various methods, including a presentation at a CEO Forum, information on the Staff webpages, and in emails such as Team Talk and the Friday CLT message. The list of activities and number of attendees at each is set out below:
- Carbon Literacy Training Day for general officers: 14 officers attended this full-day carbon literacy session, run by the Climate Change & Sustainability team, with certification of officers as carbon literate by the Carbon Literacy Project pending.
  - Lunchtime Wellbeing Walk & Litter Pick: six members of staff attended collecting 3 bags of litter from the area around the Civic Centre during a lunch hour.
  - Energy Efficiency Talks at Day Centres: no officer attended these sessions which were run at Eileen Tozer, Manor Farm, and Woodham and New Haw Day Centres. Staff were offered the opportunity to attend, but the principal audience were day centre attendees. See paragraph 2.20 below for further details.
  - Great Big Vegan Bake Off: 10 entries were submitted to the Vegan Bake Off, which was judged by a local vegan baker. The top 3 entrants received a vegan baking cookbook, with the winner getting a Social Supermarket voucher, and Star Baker apron.
  - “Thyme to Grow” Potted Herb Planting Drop-in Activity: 65 herb pots were planted during this event where staff could pop in, plant some herbs, and take away to nurture at their desks. Everything needed to take part in this was provided for staff to take part.

- Gardening Event at Victory Park: Two staff members attended alongside the organiser, however due to the numbers it was decided not to progress this event. This was a shame considering a successful gardening event in 2024, however poor weather conditions on the day was considered to be the main reason for the low attendance.
- Emissions Masterclass Lunch and Learn: Two staff members attended and were able to be taken through the masterclass.
- Sustainable Clothes Swap & Clothes Recycling Collection: A clothes rail and recycling boxes were set up in the Civic Centre servery throughout the week and have been maintained following a good level of use by officers since the week.

2.18 It is estimated that a total of around 85 members of staff took part in an event related to Great Big Green Week, or 19% of the Council's total staff cohort. This is a good outcome which exceeds the initial target set to engage 10% of employees in activities. It is evident that there was significant variability in the success of different events. The greatest participation was seen in the 'Thyme to Grow' event, a simple and swift activity that staff could engage with throughout an afternoon at a time that suited for them. The carbon literacy course was also well attended and was supported by Corporate Heads and by the potential for a recognised certification on completion. However other events were poorly attended, including the gardening event and emissions masterclass. Both activities took place across lunchtimes and required a full hour of time to take part, with neither requiring any advance notification of attendance. As this is the first year where there has been an extensive range of events for staff, it is useful to learn from 2025 and we may find it more effective in future to organise a smaller number of large events, which communications can be focussed on, supplemented with small, quick to participate activities such as the growing activity.

2.19 The platform created by the Great Big Green Week as a national initiative provided a solid foundation to run and raise awareness of environmental action with staff from various Council departments collaborating to ensure their success. While these events could have been done at any time, running them during Great Big Green Week was considered particularly beneficial and an approach that will continue to be used in the future.

#### Energy Efficiency Talks at Council Day Centres

2.20 Surrey Climate Commission run 'Save Energy and Money' talks for Surrey residents through giving practical and impartial advice on saving energy at home and support that may be available. Typically, these 20–30-minute talks are provided to community groups, however for Great Big Green Week it was arranged for a Home Energy Advice Team (HEAT) energy champion to deliver these at Manor Farm, Eileen Tozer, and Woodham and New Haw Day Centres for attendees.

2.21 The talks were delivered to an estimated total of 150 centre attendees across four talks run across Great Big Green Week. However, the feedback on the talks were mixed from the day centre managers. There may have been some initial interest, however technical issues and difficulty hearing the presenter throughout the buildings made it challenging for many listening to understand what was being said. While in some cases it did work better for the presenter to go around smaller groups and present to them directly before offering further information, in others there was not the time available to do this and therefore the opportunity to engage may have been missed. While there were limitations this year, the topic is still valuable for attendees and addressing the technical issues and allowing for time for informal discussions in the future could still make this initiative a success.

#### Balsam Bash at Chertsey Meads

2.22 The Council's Biodiversity Officer organised a 'Balsam Bash' event at Chertsey Meadows on the first Saturday of Great Big Green Week to remove invasive Himalayan Balsam from along the riverbank. This event was open to the public and the Council also teamed up with the local group Egham and Staines Conservation Volunteers who brought along several volunteers to take part. In total 16 volunteers attended, and a significant quantity of balsam was removed by the group across a morning. This was a good-sized group to manage throughout the event with the number of staff and amount of equipment available, with many taking part in this sort of activity previously. It was also a great example of collaboration between the Council and local community groups coming together for a shared activity, something that was a feature throughout Great Big Green Week 2025.

#### Events organised and run by local groups throughout Great Big Green Week

2.23 Further to events run or funded by the Council during Great Big Green Week, officers also engaged with and encouraged other local groups throughout the borough to take part in the initiative. There was a lot of interest generated across Runnymede, and the Council supported many of these initiatives where required, through such means as promotion and uploading events to relevant websites.

2.24 A list of participating groups, the events that they ran, and attendances (where known) is listed below. It should be noted that this may not be an exhaustive list, and other events may have been run by other local groups that the Council was not aware of:

- The Hub Englefield Green: Plant swap in collaboration with the Village Centre and talk about bee keeping at Egham Gardening and Allotments Association.
- Englefield Green Litter Pickers: Litter pick from Victoria Street.
- Egham Library: SEED interactive dance performance inspired by nature (40 attendees), Nature Storytime & Environmental themed Storytime (15 attendees), Rhymetime with craft (30 attendees), Plant a Seed activity in collaboration with Royal Holloway community garden (30 attendees).
- St Johns Eco-church: Community fridges on consecutive Saturdays (87 attendees at the first fridge), repair clinic (repairs included 6 bicycles, 25 knives sharpened; 1 loud hailer fixed, 2 pairs of shoes fixed, 1 pair of glasses) and a litter pick.
- Egham Treewatch: three walks organised across the week to trees in the surrounding area (one on trees protected by Tree Preservation Order, one on trees in Egham Conservation Areas and public spaces, and one on the group's favourite trees).
- Lyne Village Residents Association: Lyne litter pick
- Salvation Army Addlestone: Buzz Big Green Week family day, which included games, crafts, face painting, and more.
- Holme Farm: Wellbeing Walk (4 attendees), gardening/allotment showcase (15 attendees), nature-based yoga/reflexology session (7 attendees), balsam bash (approximately 10 attendees), evening bird walk (25 attendees).
- New Haw Litter Pickers: two litter picks (morning and afternoon) organised around the New Haw area (47 attendees)
- Fullbrook secondary school: No projector day (all students), meat free day, clothes swap, no plastic day and low carbon transport day, litter pick of school field supported by New Haw litter pickers (25 attendees)
- Sir William Perkins secondary school: school-wide week of activities, including meat-free Monday, transport Tuesday (136 participants saving an estimated 51.38kgCO<sub>2</sub>e), wild Wednesday, thrifting Thursday, and Future Friday.
- Virginia Water Library: Green Rhymetime and Green children's craft.

2.25 Following the Great Big Green Week, a Microsoft Form survey was sent to each participating local group for feedback on their events and the Council's role in supporting these. Of 12



local groups listed in paragraph 2.24, 4 provided feedback through this survey, the results from which are summarised below:

- 75% of respondents replied '**Yes**' to the question "Did you feel supported by Runnymede Borough Council in the organisation and execution of your events as part of Great Big Green Week?".
- 50% of respondents replied '**Yes**' to the question "Did you feel that aligning your events with the Runnymede Great Big Green Week was beneficial to the number of attendees at your event and its overall success?".
- 75% of respondents replied '**Yes**' to the question "Would you take part in the Runnymede Great Big Green Week in the future?". The remaining respondents to this question answered 'Maybe'.

2.26 Generally the feedback from groups on the success of their activities continues to be broadly positive, however there continues to be mixed feedback on the benefits of aligning with the Runnymede Local Green Week for promoting activities and encouraging involvement of residents. The learnings from the photography competition this year, which benefited from a paid social media campaign, could be applied to the broader Great Big Green Week for 2026 as a way to further the reach of communications related to the initiative.

2.27 Local groups were asked if there were any additional benefits to their organisation generated from running activities during the Great Big Green Week, such as new interest in the initiatives, new volunteers, or new collaborations. Two groups stated that they had benefitted from collaborations with new partners or other groups during their events. This was a strong feature across Great Big Green Week 2025, with lots of examples of organisations teaming up to deliver enhanced programmes and maximise engagement. This included Fullbrook School with New Haw Litter Pickers, the Hub and Village Centre, and the Council with Egham and Staines Conservation Volunteers.

2.28 Local groups were asked if there is "anything that Runnymede Borough Council could have done to improve their support for your events organised as part of Great Big Green Week which could be implemented in the future?". Half of the respondents did not provide any improvements, and the remaining responses indicated that they felt well looked after and appreciated the resources and prompts that were provided by officers.

2.29 It is also notable that there were many other Great Big Green Week events organised by community groups within the Surrey area, but outside of Runnymede. For example, in Spelthorne, Talking Tree organised a 'Thrive Festival' and in Guildford, Zero Carbon organised a series of events around Great Big Green Week. It is very positive to see this level of engagement in a single initiative across the county.

### **Great Big Green Week 2026: Options for Council participation**

2.30 There are various options for how the Council could get involved in next year's Great Big Green Week, which are set out below:

#### **Option 1: Support and promote**

2.31 The Council supports and promotes the Great Big Green Week by encouraging uptake and participation by residents and local community groups. For example, local sports clubs, environmental groups, schools, local businesses, youth groups, faith groups, as well as any other organisations or individuals who may have an interest in tackling climate change. Closer to the week's start date, the Council could collate a list of local events based on details provided by the groups participating and advertise and promote them to residents.

This could be done via posters/banners and sharing information and links to the Great Big Green Week's website via social media, newsletters and using the Council's website. A comprehensive comms pack is available from The Climate Coalition.

#### Option 2: Support, promote and co-ordinate

2.32 The Council supports the Great Big Green Week as described in Option 1 above. However, in addition, the Council effectively becomes the co-ordinator of a 'Runnymede Local Green Week' by registering it on the Great Big Green Week website as an overarching Borough based event. Local groups wishing to participate would then be able to tag Runnymede Local Green Week when they sign up their events taking place in the Borough. The events will be automatically pulled together as one big event for Runnymede on the Great Big Green Week website. If local groups sign up separately and do not tag the Council's banner, officers can still search the Great Big Green Week website via post code and contact those groups to see if they want to fall under the Runnymede Local Green Week.

#### Option 3: Support, promote, co-ordinate and provide assistance

2.33 The Council support the Great Big Green Week as in Option 2 above but additionally look to provide support where practical and within our remit if approached by local groups or residents who would like to put on an event.

2.34 For the avoidance of doubt, Council support would be subject to the usual application processes. All requests would be subject to evaluation and some requests may have to be declined.

#### Option 4: Support, promote, co-ordinate, provide assistance and participate

2.35 This option would build on option 3 above, but would also see the Council running its own series of events during the week with the aims of:

- Bringing together and engaging with our residents (including our young people) and businesses on the important issue of climate change.
- Celebrating local climate change initiatives and encouraging more people and organisations to develop their own initiatives.
- Raising the profile of the Council's response to climate change.
- Providing useful information and signposting other relevant organisations to give people the tools they need to help the Borough transition to net zero carbon by 2050.

2.36 Please note that the running of our own events is currently unfunded. Please see section 4 of this report below for further detail around resource and funding.

#### **Officer recommended option for Council participation**

2.37 Based on the success of Great Big Green Week 2025, the officer recommendation would be for the committee to pursue option 4, as set out in paragraph 2.35. This was the agreed level of participation for 2024 and 2025, and it is felt that there is now a strong momentum behind the Great Big Green Week in Runnymede, including some of the specific Council events, such as the photography competition which generate positive outcomes. By the addition of participation, the Council is leading the way on climate action and environmental protection rather than placing full reliance on the initiative success with local groups.

2.38 While it is outlined in section 4 that there has been a cost to the Council of Great Big Green Week 2025, the implementation of option 4 can be done at zero or very low cost to the

Council. However, it should be noted that a zero-cost approach will limit the scope of promotion and events that can be organised as part of Great Big Green Week by the Council. Financial resources currently available within the existing climate change budget are set out in section 4 and any funding over and above that outlined in this section would need to be sought from alternative sources.

- 2.39 Knowing well in advance of the 2026 Great Big Green Week what the preference of the Committee is would allow officers a greater opportunity to plan events, secure the services of relevant stakeholders and explore funding opportunities (if required).

### **3. Policy framework implications**

- 3.1 In addition to supporting the Council's Climate Change Strategy, as outlined in paragraph 1.1 of this report, positive involvement in the Great Big Green Week also supports three further adopted corporate strategies:

#### *The Empowering Communities Strategy*

- 3.2 Priority 2 - Listening to residents.  
Priority 3 - Enabling communities to help themselves.  
Priority 4 - Enabling communities to take control of services or plans for their areas.  
Priority 5 - Advocacy: standing up and pressing Government and other organisations to meet Runnymede residents' priorities.  
Priority 6 - Working effectively with partner organisations.

#### *The Economic Development Strategy*

- 3.3 Priority 6 – Developing a low carbon economy: Encourage businesses to be more sustainable and develop the low carbon circular economy. This priority states that, *'As far as possible, the Council will adopt and promote the principles of the Circular Economy (take, make, use, reuse, reuse) and decouple from the Linear Economy (take, make, use, throw) to minimise Carbon Emissions and waste, reduce environmental damage and increase biodiversity and health. The Council will work with Surrey, the Enterprise M3 LEP and Royal Holloway University of London to increase take up from local businesses of grants, business support and access to knowledge transfer programmes to encourage businesses to be more sustainable'.*

#### *The Health and Wellbeing Strategy*

- 3.4 Contains a strategic objective related to healthy communities which seeks to ensure that all residents are able to engage and participate in their community, access services, facilities, amenities, leisure, and recreational opportunities locally.

### **4. Resource implications/Value for Money**

- 4.1 A total of £7,150 was spent on the 2025 Great Big Green Week. £6,750 was attributed to the Brickies Club workshops delivered in primary schools, which were funded entirely through the external Surrey Your Councillor Community Fund and Runnymede Borough Council's Youth Development Fund. £200 was spent on the successful paid social media campaign to promote the 'Our Beautiful Borough' photography competition, £150 on gift vouchers and prizes for winners of the photography competition and Great Big Vegan Bake Off, and £50 on materials to facilitate staff events (e.g. seeds and planting resources for the time to grow event, clothing rail for the clothes swap event). Planning, organisation, and execution of initiatives utilised existing officer resource from across the Council, particularly

the Climate Change, Communications, and Community Services teams with a heightened level of officer involvement during Great Big Green Week.

- 4.2 The officer resource and finance implications for the 2026 Great Big Green Week will be assessed once the Committee has confirmed the level of involvement that they would like to see. As a general point, it should be noted that there currently is a small allowance allocated each financial year in the Climate Change budget to fund the promotion of events (£1500 in 2025/26). The amount to be allocated for the 2026/27 Financial Year is unknown at the time of writing. This could contribute to the running of events during the 2026 Great Big Green Week if Members wish to pursue option 4. Any funds beyond this would need to be secured from alternative sources to be explored by officers once the desired level of involvement has been confirmed by the committee.

## **5 Legal implications**

- 5.1 The legal implications associated with the 2025 Great Big Green Week were regularly assessed as the proposals were developed.
- 5.2 The legal implications associated with the 2026 Great Big Green Week would be regularly assessed as any proposals were developed.

## **6. Equality implications**

- 6.1 The Council has a Public Sector Duty under the Equalities Act 2020 to have due regard to the nine 'protected characteristics' stated within the Act.
- 6.2 An Equalities Impact Assessment screening may be required if the Committee wishes to participate in the 2026 Great Big Green Week. This will be assessed once the level of involvement sought (and the types of events to be run (if option 4 is selected)) is known.

## **7. Environmental/Sustainability/Biodiversity implications**

- 7.1 The implications for environmental/sustainability/biodiversity associated with participation in the Great Big Green Week are positive. By engaging in this initiative which aims to celebrate local action to tackle climate change, raise awareness of environmental concerns and encourage others to get involved, it is anticipated that more individuals and groups are positively engaged in environmental activities.

## **8. Risk Implications**

- 8.1 As mentioned in this report, at present there is no funding that is directly attributed to Council's participation in Great Big Green Week. While there is some funding available for event promotion in the Climate Change budget, and officers have successfully utilised other funding sources to secure activities for this year, it is not guaranteed that this will be the case for future years. This may become increasingly relevant if the interest and popularity of specific initiatives, such as Brickies workshops, continues to rise. This is considered a medium risk, however knowing the level of participation desired from the Committee early enables officers to begin exploring potential funding routes and establishing ideas and interest for the next Great Big Green Week with partner organisations.
- 8.2 Great Big Green Week 2025 was resourced using existing officer time; however, it was evident from certain events run throughout the week that events can be poorly attended for several reasons, some of which may be outside of officer control. In addition, there were higher resource requirements on key teams in the build up to Great Big Green Week, including Climate Change and Communications which would have been very challenging to

manage with less officers available. As such, further potential risks are associated with being able to effectively resource Great Big Green Week within existing officer resource across the Council to maximise the potential offered by the initiative. This is considered medium risk as the Council has managed to engage many local groups which reduces the direct demand on officer time whilst still maintaining a diverse event schedule across the borough. To mitigate this risk, early knowledge of participation and early involvement of all relevant teams is crucial, alongside ensuring the required resource is in place within each team.

- 8.3 As mentioned above, the Council was successful in continuing to engage a wide range of local groups in Great Big Green Week. This is a key feature of the initiative's success and enabled a broader scope of events and engagement with a greater range of residents than would have been possible had the Council focussed exclusively on its own activities. However, this results in a reliance from the Council on these groups engaging in the future which may not always be possible due to a variety of resourcing, time, or financial constraints. This is a low risk as many of the groups have expressed an interest in participating in the initiative in the future with the Council aiming to again provide early engagement with groups and providing support as far as is practicable with all elements of the events. Officers will also take the key learnings from 2025 and feedback from the participant survey, and work with local groups to implement any suggestions where possible.

## **9. Other implications**

- 9.1 Subject to the direction of the Committee on the level of involvement sought during the 2026 Great Big Green Week, there may be further implications which arise during the preparation and implementation phases. These will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

## **10. Timetable for Implementation**

- 10.1 An indicative timetable for the 2026 Great Big Green Week will be set once the level of participation sought by the Committee is known.

## **11. Conclusions**

- 11.1 Great Big Green Week 2025 is considered to have been another great success in the Council's ongoing engagement across the borough to promote and celebrate environmental action. Over 50 events were run across the borough by both the Council and local groups engaging over 2300 people in environmental initiatives that ranged from litter picks to eco-school building, and wellbeing walks to upcycled crafting. While this is very positive, there continue to be valuable learnings which can be implemented for future years as this is only the third year the Council has actively participated in the initiative (having chosen to only support and promote the Great Big Green Week in 2022). Maintaining a consistent engagement with Great Big Green Week is key to raising further awareness of the week, maintaining and expanding the Council's involvement with groups across the borough to support climate change and sustainability initiatives, and encouraging greater participation in environmental activities from all throughout the year.

## **12. Background papers**

- 12.1 Members attention is drawn to the Corporate Management Committee report of 26 September 2024 providing information on the Great Big Green Week 2024 and presenting options for involvement in 2025. This report is available here: [– Runnymede Borough Council](#)

## **13. Appendices**

- None