

Environment and Sustainability Panel Meeting

**Grand Jury Room, Town Hall, High Street,
Colchester, CO1 1PJ**

Thursday, 22 June 2023 at 18:00

The Environment and Sustainability Panel explores methods of conservation of natural habitats and biodiversity through adapting existing practices or creating new ecologically diverse environments. The Panel encourages renewable energy generation and carbon footprint reduction in both the public and private sectors by examining air and water quality, plastic and waste reduction and renewable energy generation. The Panel monitors

the progress and implementation of the Council's Emergency Climate Action Plan and regularly reports to Cabinet and Full Council.

Access to information and meetings

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<https://colchester.cmis.uk.com/colchester/MeetingCalendar.aspx>.

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Environment and Sustainability Panel - Terms of Reference (but not limited to)

1. To acknowledge our “Climate Emergency” and translate aspirations into actions.
2. To explore methods of conservation of natural habitats and biodiversity, whether through adapting existing practices and places or creating new ecologically diverse environments with sustainable practices built in.
3. To engage, communicate and collaborate with strategic partners, external bodies, Parish Councils and local communities, to encourage biodiversity enhancement and sustainable practices through their work.
4. To encourage environmental stewardship focusing on carbon footprint reduction by improving air quality, water quality, plastic and waste reduction and renewable energy generation in both public and private spheres across the City.
5. To be a leading voice for environmental sustainability, promoting innovative environmental practices, having influence across the City and beyond, including public and private sector policy, at regional and national levels.
6. To promote, monitor and regularly report to Cabinet and Full Council upon progress and implementation of the Council’s Climate Emergency Action Plan and it’s goal to be net carbon neutral by 2030.

COLCHESTER CITY COUNCIL
Environment and Sustainability Panel
Thursday, 22 June 2023 at 18:00

The Environment and Sustainability Panel Members are:

Councillor Steph Nissen
Councillor Tracey Arnold
Councillor Molly Bloomfield
Councillor Pam Cox
Councillor Paul Dundas
Councillor Andrew Ellis
Councillor Mark Goacher
Councillor Sue Lissimore
Councillor Venessa Moffat
Councillor Natalie Sommers

Chairman
Deputy Chairman

The Environment and Sustainability Panel Substitute Members are:

All members of the Council who are not Cabinet members or members of this Panel.

AGENDA
THE LIST OF ITEMS TO BE DISCUSSED AT THE MEETING
(Part A - open to the public)

Please note that Agenda items 1 to 6 are normally dealt with briefly.

1 Welcome and Announcements

The Chair will welcome members of the public and Councillors to the meeting and remind those participating to mute their microphones when not talking. The Chair will invite all Councillors and Officers participating in the meeting to introduce themselves.

2 Substitutions

Councillors will be asked to say if they are attending on behalf of a Committee member who is absent.

3 Urgent Items

The Chairman will announce if there is any item not on the published agenda which will be considered because it is urgent and will explain the reason for the urgency.

4 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillors will be asked to say if there are any items on the agenda about which they have a disclosable pecuniary interest which would prevent them from participating in any discussion of the item or participating in any vote upon the item, or any other registerable interest or non-registerable interest.

5 **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The Councillors will be invited to confirm that the minutes of the meeting held on 21 March 2023 and 24 May 2023 are a correct record.

Environment and Sustainability Panel draft minutes 21-03-23 7 - 18

Environment and Sustainability Panel draft minutes 24-05-23 19 - 20

6 **Have Your Say! (Hybrid Council Meetings)**

Members of the public may make representations to Council meetings on any item on the agenda or any other matter relating to the business of the Panel. This can be made either in person at the meeting or by joining the meeting remotely and addressing the Panel via Zoom. Each representation may be no more than three minutes. Members of the public wishing to address Council remotely may register their wish to address the meeting by e-mailing democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk by 12.00 noon on the working day before the meeting. In addition, a written copy of the representation should be supplied for use in the event of technical difficulties preventing participation at the meeting itself.

There is no requirement to pre-register for those attending in person.

Live Broadcast

Please follow this link to watch the meeting live on YouTube:

[\(107\) ColchesterCBC - YouTube](#)

7 **Introduction and Overview of work on Environment and Sustainability** 21 - 32

The Panel will consider a report introducing the Council's work on tackling the climate emergency and promoting sustainability and outlines upcoming priorities for the year.

8 **Climate Emergency Action Plan Update** 33 - 38

The Panel will consider a report detailing key progress and updates from actions in the Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP), and other relevant updates since the last meeting on 21 March 2023.

The Panel will consider a report setting out its proposed work programme for the forthcoming municipal year.

Exclusion of the Public (not Scrutiny or Executive)

In accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 to exclude the public, including the press, from the meeting so that any items containing exempt information (for example confidential personal, financial or legal advice), in Part B of this agenda (printed on yellow paper) can be decided. (Exempt information is defined in Section 100I and Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972).

Part B
(not open to the public including the press)

Environment and Sustainability Panel

21 March 2023

Present: Councillor Molly Bloomfield
Councillor Michelle Burrows
Councillor Mark Goacher
Councillor Kayleigh Rippingale
Councillor Lee Scordis (Chair)
Councillor Michael Spindler

Substitutes: Councillor Lewis Barber for Councillor Sue Lissimore
Councillor Sam McCarthy for Councillor Arnold

Also present: Councillor William Sunnucks*

*attended remotely

86. Minutes of the previous meeting

RESOLVED that: the minutes of the meeting of 31 January 2023 be confirmed as a correct record.

87. Have Your Say!

Stuart Johnson attended the meeting and addressed the Panel in accordance with the Council's Have Your Say! arrangements. He welcomed the Council's plans to make it easier to walk, wheel and cycle in Colchester. The Panel was reminded that the Colchester Future Transport Strategy adopted by both Essex County Council (ECC) and Colchester City Council encouraged active and safe sustainable travel, and the Panel heard that Colchester Cycling Campaign supported the Council's actions to promote this and looked forward to the opening of secure cycle parking in the city centre. It was noted that many of the changes to promote active travel needed to be taken by ECC as the Highway Authority, however, the Council could assist by providing more secure cycle parking and bike hangers at dwellings. With regard to School Streets, Colchester Cycling Campaign felt that the approach taken by ECC was too timid, and the Winstree Road school street scheme had not achieved the desired result of encouraging more active travel that was needed to combat climate change and air pollution. More radical action was needed, and the Panel was requested to write to ECC to request a stronger approach to school streets and to ask that school streets were closed to traffic at school pick up and drop off times. Emily Harrup, Transport and Sustainability Joint Lead, advised that the secure cycle parking was currently being fitted out and would be open soon, and the provision of cycle hangers was a project which the Council was keen to look at in the future.

Rachel Matthews attended the meeting and addressed the Panel in accordance with the Council's Have Your Say! arrangements. She was part of a group of unaffiliated individuals who were concerned about environment issues and government policies. Given the advice received from central government had changed in the past, had the Panel members carried out their own independent research into the environmental impact into making the batteries for the proposed electric vehicles. The Panel heard that, according to the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, in order to extract lithium, a single mine could use over 5,000 tonnes of sulphuric acid a day, extracted by the use of 3,000 gallons of water per minute and could produce over 350 million cubic yards of permanent waste. Cobalt was also required for rechargeable batteries and the Panel was reminded that at its last meeting, a panel member had asked that the Council use ethically sourced batteries. The Panel heard that as 70% of cobalt was mined by children, this was not possible, and no company could legitimately claim that the cobalt in any rechargeable battery in their products did not come from such a source. The Panel was urged not to support such exploitation, when there were alternatives to electric vehicles (EVs), and the spending of public money on any product containing a lithium battery would not be supported. Would the Council give its assurance that it would do what was right and not be pressured by government into action which did more harm than good. Ben Plummer, Climate Emergency Project Officer, confirmed that the Council had researched the environmental impact of producing lithium batteries and accepted that there were environmental issues associated with this. The Council's approach was to consider the life cycle of products which it used, and when considering the tailpipe emissions which electric cycles produced when compared to cars, there could be an overall environmentally positive impact. The difficulty in sourcing ethically produced batteries was acknowledged, but the Council did work with companies which demonstrated corporate social responsibility as part of their procurement processes. The restrictions which were being placed on the sales of petrol and diesel vehicles beyond 2030 by central government was something not within the Councils control and work was undertaken to align the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan with this. All actions contained within the Plan were subject to independent research with lay experts in the community and academics. In response, Rachel Matthews advised the Panel that there were alternatives to EVs, with the company JCB having developed a zero emission hydrogen engine. Options such as these should be considered ahead of EVs for the Council's fleet vehicles and busses and the Council needed to set an example by boycotting the use of unethically produced batteries.

James O'Flynn attended the meeting and addressed the Panel in accordance with the Council's Have Your Say! arrangements, and asked a number of questions of the Panel:

1. Was the Panel was able to voice the environmental concerns of residents to ECC on their behalf?
2. Could he be provided with the methodology used by the Council in calculating its emissions in tCO₂e, including the data used in the methodology published by EcoAct which showed how the figure was arrived at. Had this figure been independently verified?
3. Had the Panel calculated the amount of CO₂ that would be produced making EVs that would be used to replace the existing fleet?

4. Could the Panel provide the data used to calculate how many cars would need to be off the road to make a noticeable difference to air quality in Colchester?
5. Would the Council carry out a full consultation in respect of the proposed cycle lanes and electric cycle scheme, as he did not feel that a survey of 800 residents was sufficient?

The Panel was advised that a priority should be made to maintain and repair the roads of Colchester which were in an appalling condition, and not to spend millions on providing alternative transport routes for the minority or road users, no matter how well-intentioned this was. Mr O'Flynn advised the panel that according to the Office of Statistics, only a single death of a child with asthma had been attributed to air pollution in the last 20 years, and not the 4,000 deaths per year that had been recently referenced by the Mayor of London.

The Chair of the Panel advised Mr O'Flynn that although the Panel could write to ECC on their behalf, it would be more effective if residents contacted ECC direct via email or through contacting the relevant Cabinet Member whose details would be published online. The Climate Emergency Project Officer advised the Panel that the methodology provided by EcoAct was only used for estimating emissions associated with working from home, and the methodology used for calculating the Council's overall emissions was a greenhouse gas emissions calculator provided by Local Partnerships and the Local Government Association (LGA). Information on both these calculators could be provided, and was publicly available. It was intended that the Council's fleet would be replaced vehicle by vehicle, and EVs were considered to be more ecologically friendly than diesel ones. The Transport and Sustainability Joint Lead advised the Panel that ECC carried out more detailed air quality monitoring than the Council did, and had more sophisticated tools to do this. It was clarified that the 800 people who had been mentioned at the previous Panel meeting had not been by way of consultation, but was simply public engagement through talking to people at events. This information was not used by ECC when making decisions about the highway, but rather would be used to inform local Council projects. ECC had carried out a number of public consultations over the past few years which were publicly available and had been promoted in a variety of different ways. Government funding was specifically restricted in its use, and any grants that the Council was successful in being awarded were tied to specific programme and projects. A lot of the projects which the Council was running were geared towards encouraging shared ownership, meaning that there would be a better distribution of resources and associated reduction in environmental impact.

Cheryl Taylor attended the meeting and addressed the Panel in accordance with the Council's Have Your Say! arrangements. She posed a number of questions to the Panel:

1. Had the Panel considered the dangers of electric vehicles in their planning, and had a fire service approved safety plan been created for dealing with the fires?
2. The Panel heard that over the last 5 years, there had been over 500 fires in London caused by EV batteries, including cars, busses, scooters, electric bicycles and heavy goods vehicles. These fires were extremely difficult to put out, and necessitated the closing of buildings or areas for a period of time for

safety reasons. In the light of this, had a plan been developed to combat these issues if an EV fire were to break out in a multi-storey car park or at an EV charging station?

3. Had the Council formulated evacuation plans for a neighbourhood in the event of an EV refuse vehicle fire, and would it take responsibility for safely dealing with the polluted water which had been used to fight the fire?
4. Do the Council's existing safety measures meet up to the new fire regulations that are soon to be implemented with regard to EV fires? If not, it was requested that safety plans were drawn up with the fire service for the existing e-scooters and fleet vehicles, and remove these from use until an approved safety plan was in place. It was considered that the Council and its Officers had a duty of care to the public and any Officer or Councillors who authorised the use of EVs could be held personally liable.

The Panel heard that it was felt that EVs were a great danger to the public, and it was requested that the Council did not go ahead with any more vehicles of this nature, particularly as there were safer and greener options. The Climate Emergency Project Officer was not necessarily the right Officer to respond to these questions, but he believed that relevant risk assessments were carried out before the Council proceeded with any large project, such as the purchasing of vehicles, and it was right that any risks posed by EVs should be considered. Cheryl Taylor advised the Panel that she considered that there were safer alternatives to EVs, such as hydrogen engines, which were now coming to the forefront of the market.

Ian Drew attended the meeting and addressed the Panel in accordance with the Council's Have Your Say! arrangements. He considered that the Strategic Plan for Colchester for 2023 and onwards was based around what the Council saw as a climate emergency, in its quest to achieve net zero carbon emissions. He believed that there was other information that should be considered, and wondered whether the Council would proceed with its current strategy if it knew that man-made climate change was not true. He considered that the idea of 15 minute cities was a global initiative and was a template for a great reset with the final aim of rolling out 17 sustainable development goals under the guise of achieving net zero. The Green Party and other climate activists did not understand what the long-term implication of net zero were. The aim of Agenda 2030 was for absolute zero to be achieved by 2050, and this would mean no flying or shopping out of the United Kingdom with wood burners and other fossil fuel appliances removed from every home and no fossil fuelled vehicles, with only EV travel available for people and freight. He believed that this state of affairs had been planned since the 1970s, and would result in the requirement for digital identification containing all an individuals' personal data by the end of the year, with a central bank and digital currency to follow. He thought that traffic restrictions were designed to generate congestion on the roads and cause pollution, which would in turn lead to movement charging and the encouragement for people to stay at home in 15 minute cities. Mr Drew stated that cameras were already being installed which would enable movement restrictions to be enforced and which would enable the movements of individuals to be tracked, and charges levied for exceeding a designated carbon footprint. He called for a public debate so that the people could decide what they wanted, which may not be a future forced upon them by central government.

The Chair of the Panel acknowledged the comments which had been made, but reminded the Panel that the Council had declared a climate emergency in 2019. Mr Drew was entitled not to believe in man-made climate change, but the Council did believe in this. It was confirmed that no plans were being discussed in Colchester for congestion charges or 15 minute cities. Those present who wished to set up a public debate to discuss the issue raised were welcome to do so, but the Chair did not consider that the Council would entertain this.

88. Waste and Recycling Strategy Update

The Panel considered a report setting out the progress of the development of the Council's Recycling and Waste strategy following the approach approved by the Environment and Sustainability Panel on 20 September 2022, in the context of other decisions made by the Council in light of the current economic climate and the agreement of a new Strategic Plan.

Rosa Tanfield, Group Manager, Neighbourhood Services, attended the meeting to present the report and assist the Panel with its enquiries. An independent consultant, Ricardo, had been appointed and who would be supporting Officers in developing the Waste and Recycling Strategy in the future. The report set out details of the difficult financial climate that the Council was working in, as well as some of the early decisions which had already been taken on changes to the Recycling and Waste Service, but which would be considered as part of the Strategy development in the future. The outcome of a consultation organised by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) was awaited, particularly with regard to the consistency of household collections which would have a strong influence on the development of the Strategy.

In response to a question from the Panel, it was confirmed that no decision had been taken as to whether or not the Council would instigate charging for providing recycling materials, however, the Council was in a difficult financial position, and the possibility of levying such charges had already been discussed by Full Council, and would be considered as part of the development of the Strategy.

RESOLVED that: the contents of the report be noted.

89. Climate Emergency Action Plan – Summary of Progress

The Panel considered a report detailing key progress made with the actions within Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) over the past year.

Ben Plummer, Climate Emergency Project Officer, attended the meeting to present the report and assist the Panel with its enquiries. It was intended that considerations of environmental impact and sustainability were embedded throughout the Council, and not just contained within a small sustainability team. The CEAP was populated and monitored by Officers across the whole Council, and was aligned with other key Strategic Priorities of the Council such as supporting employment and business, together with other green agendas. The CEAP was integrated with city centre

development, such as the Masterplan and Town Deal, and supported the delivery of more sustainable transport means. Key to this work were the Council's partner organisations such as the Colchester Institute, the University of Essex, schools, businesses and community groups. The aims of the CEAP were broader than simply reducing carbon emissions, and other environmental improvements such as improvement in air quality and an increase in biodiversity would also be realised.

Some of the key areas of progress and achievements of the past year were drawn to the attention of the Panel:

- Work had been undertaken with an external contractor to identify decarbonisation actions at Council owned buildings.
- Electric vehicles (EVs) had been introduced.
- Work had been carried out to consider the feasibility of a solar park and microgrid to power the development at the Northern Gateway.
- Action had been taken to naturalise and support biodiversity on the Council's green spaces.
- Tree planting had been carried out in conjunction with community groups and charities.
- Innovative forms of travel had been supported such as e-cargo bikes and electric scooters.
- The Council had worked to support improvements to wayfinding and the travel infrastructure through involvement with projects such as 'fixing the link'.
- The air quality awareness and behaviour change campaign, CAREless had been successfully implemented.
- Communities had been supported to assist them in keeping local spaces litter free.
- Council staff had attended at community events throughout the year, using public engagement to better inform the implementation of future projects.
- Collaborative work had been undertaken with key institutions on climate change action.
- Working with local businesses to increase their access to skills and training to encourage and support learning about sustainability.
- Integrating sustainable thinking and behaviours within the Council itself.

The next steps to be taken under the CEAP had been identified, and were:

- With regard to the decarbonisation of the Council's buildings, a set of measures had been identified and a plan would be created setting out the costs and savings of each identified measure, and the proposed timeline of implementation.
- Increasing engagement and awareness on sustainable travel and air quality, which would be supported by a successful bid to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), increasing engagement with businesses and schools.
- The proposed secure cycle park would open, and would also host a shared eCargo bike hub allowing for the hiring of eCargo bikes for individual journeys.
- Signage relating to walking and cycling routes would be improved.
- A new Recycling and Waste Strategy would be developed.

- 3 new environmentally focussed Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) would be introduced
- Residents would be supported in obtaining grant funding to make energy efficiency improvements to their homes.

The Panel were advised that the actions contained within the CEAP were independently reviewed by Climate Emergency UK. All local authorities had been reviewed in January 2022 when Colchester City Council had received a score of 52%, above the average score of 43%. Rating was now taking place on the effectiveness of any climate action which local authorities had taken, and the results of this would be published in Autumn 2023. Following the Council's initial score of 52%, a thorough review had been carried out of the CEAP, and actions taken to improve this where possible in areas such as communication of the Council's aims and activities, and greater consideration being given to the impact of the Council's actions on inequalities.

In response to questions from the Panel, the Climate Emergency Project Officer confirmed that Officers had visited the Colchester Eco Festival, however, it was intended that a broader range of community events would be attended to seek as broad a range of views from the community as possible. Solar panels were present on some of the Council's buildings, and the level of coverage would be increased where this was possible. The Council was represented on the Town Deal Board.

A Panel member noted that hydrogen vehicles were being successfully used in Aberdeen, including a refuse vehicle, and considered that further research should be undertaken into this method of vehicle power before any large developments were undertaken to provide additional EV infrastructure. They were particularly concerned by the increasing proliferation of artificial grass in new build housing estates, and wondered whether there was anything that the Council could do to combat this. It was noted that The Climate Emergency Project Officer advised the Panel that he believed that the use of plastic grass had been included in the new biodiversity SPD.

Rosa Tanfield, Group Manager – Neighbourhood Services, advised the Panel that consideration had been given to the necessary balance between public access to Cymbeline Meadow and the promotion of increased biodiversity, and strong feedback had been received on this point as part of the Council's Woodland and Biodiversity Project. Plans were being developed which would ensure that the nature reserve would be enjoyed by people as well as increasing the biodiversity which was there. The Panel was advised that the Council had previously agreed a Fleet Transition Plan which set out how the Council intended to transition its fleet from diesel vehicles to vehicles generating as possible close to zero emissions by 2030. Within the Plan, the Council was open to utilising any technology which had been proven to be effective, and had been actively considering alternative fuels. The largest hurdle was the large heavy goods vehicle (HGV) fleet, and work was ongoing with other local authorities who had utilised different fuel vehicles to ensure that the most efficient use was made of public money when the Council wished to invest in new vehicles or technology.

In response to questions from a Panel member, the Group Manager – Neighbourhood Services explained to the Panel that the Council was the waste

collection authority, whereas Essex County Council (ECC) were the waste disposal authority, and there were legal obligations on both authorities in these roles. ECC gave the Council directions on how waste was disposed of, and the Council was part of an Essex-wide partnership with other local authorities and ECC which was governed by the Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy. This strategy was in the process of being reviewed, and would address both how material was collected and then treated. There would be an opportunity to feed into this review later in the year for Councillors and members of the public.

In discussion, the Panel wondered whether free cycle training could be expanded to more rural areas, noting that one of the largest barriers to people cycling more was a lack of confidence, which may be able to be addressed through training. Emily Harrup, Transport and Sustainability Joint Lead, confirmed that both the Council and ECC did have funding for free training, and there was therefore scope for more training, which was designed to improve confidence and safety on cyclists on the road. Any help which Councillors could offer in promoting the availability of this training would be greatly appreciated.

The Climate Emergency Project Officer confirmed that Leisure World did have a Heat Decarbonisation Plan which had been prepared with an independent consultant, and the Council was currently working to identify suitable options to tackle the high emissions from the site.

The Panel considered that thought could be given to expanding the Council's 'No Mow' initiative, in conjunction with Ward Councillors. The provision of additional cycle hangers would be supported by the Panel, together with cycle parking being provided at strategic locations such as multi-storey car parks where there was currently unused space. The expansion of the provision of free or subsidised bikes into areas of greater deprivation in Colchester was encouraged by the Panel, potentially working with schools to identify areas of need, although it was acknowledged that this was funded via the Town Deal. Julian Sanchez of ECC attended the meeting remotely and advised the Panel that the expansion of the Essex Pedal Power scheme was something which he would be keen to support if the necessary funding could be obtained. All opportunities for further funding and expansion of the scheme were being considered wherever possible.

RESOLVED that: the contents of the report be noted.

90. Air Quality – Schools Activity

The Panel considered a report providing an update on the activities being undertaken locally to change driver behaviour around schools to improve air quality.

Julian Sanchez, Essex County Council, attended the meeting and addressed the Panel. Essex County Council (ECC) was committed to creating the conditions for as many children as possible to walk, wheel or cycle to school to promote wellbeing and reduce traffic pressure around school gates and reduce vehicle emissions. Consideration had been given to different methods of implementing School Streets,

including volunteer marshal training and the use of movable bollards and fixed penalty notices, and ECC had developed its own School Street model for Essex. The ECC model recognised that an enforcement approach could be taken if this was what was wanted by parents and schools, however, it was initially intended to use rewards and incentives to encourage physical changes to be made around schools to raise awareness of drivers in the area, and increase road safety. Changes in behaviour and habits would be promoted through each school identifying the most effective solution for their locality. Over time it was intended to transform streets around schools to make it much more comfortable and safe for children to access their schools in a way that built consensus in communities and offered encouragement to travelling to school in a different way.

In discussion, the Panel wondered whether a tougher approach would be warranted if the evidence which had been gathered supported this, and it considered that engaging school children in the project would be important to its success. It was noted that although enforcement was an option, the preferred approach would be a gentle introduction of any changes to avoid a backlash, with the aim being to engage and encourage involvement in the scheme, rather than enforce it. Incentives were being considered as a mechanism of encouraging support for the scheme, potentially also involving businesses local to schools.

Julian confirmed that funding had been received to cover a small number of schools in Colchester, and that at the present time the focus was on information gathering about the different types of school and the trips which were taken to it. It was hoped that more funding would allow more schools to be involved in the future. The Panel heard that enforcement activity was considered to be the last resort, if all other methods had been trialled at a school, and problem parking was still an issue. Because funding had been limited, ECC had initially approached schools in certain areas and was now trying to expand the number of schools who would be interested in the scheme. Input from Councillors to assist communication with schools would be appreciated, and it was confirmed to the Panel that although funding was difficult, if a school was keen to trial some measures then funding would be found to support this. It was confirmed to the Panel that ECC did provide some school transport where pupils lived over a certain distance from a school. It was suggested that the Panel receive an updated report on progress made in a year's time. It was suggested that the Chair of the Panel write to the relevant Cabinet member of ECC on behalf of the Panel to request that every school in Colchester was required to provide an up to date Travel Plan.

Emily Harrup, Transport and Sustainability Joint Lead, attended the meeting to provide the Panel with an update on the Council's CAREless campaign. Statistics provided by Public Health England showed that pollution contributed to 36,000 deaths in the United Kingdom (UK) each year, with a total annual cost to the National Health Service (NHS) of £157m. There were 3 Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) in Colchester, and 1 in 20 deaths in Colchester was linked to poor air quality, with children among the most vulnerable to health impacts from air pollution.

The campaign had initially started in 2019 following the receipt of DEFRA grant funding, taking an asset based community approach to a project designed to encourage behaviour change by raising awareness of air pollution and encouraging

drivers to switch off their engines. Over 3,000 residents, schools and businesses had been engaged, and the CAREless branding and campaign had been co-designed with an advisory stakeholder group. More funding had recently been received to support more focussed work to be carried out with schools, and a school's toolkit had been developed which linked in with the curriculum and contained ideas and activities, together with information on travel planning. The CAREless pollution team had carried a wide variety of activities with local schools to utilise the toolkit, including the loaning of air pollution monitors, conducting themed assemblies and actions around Clean Air Day in both 2021 and 2022. To date, there had been engagement of different sorts with approximately 28 schools, dependent on what the individual school wanted.

Phase 1 of the campaign had been evaluated in 2021, and it was found that 63% of carers/parents were aware of the campaign, 65% of drivers outside schools reported that they switched off their engines more than they had a year ago, with only 21% of drivers stating that they never switched off their engine. The next steps for the campaign included continuing to work with schools to build on its current momentum, with a view to securing its legacy once funding was no longer available. It was hoped to integrate walking and cycling more fully within School Street schemes through further development of the school's toolkit. Councillors were asked to help by providing funding where possible, and to use their community networks to help develop a network of volunteers to increase capacity and support localised action within their Wards.

The Panel was very supportive of the work which had been carried out, particularly the level of engagement which had been achieved with schoolchildren, and it was noted that this was something which Officers were very keen to develop and build on. It was considered important that effective communication was key to the continuing success of the campaign, particularly in relation to the significant health impacts associated with air pollution.

RESOLVED that:

- The Panel would support and help facilitate the ongoing educational approach to changing driver behaviour around schools in relation to engine idling and active travel.
- The Panel would support Essex County Council's plans for school streets and the CAREless Pollution campaign by:
 - o Providing funding where possible (particularly towards Healthy School Streets)
 - o Using community connections to help develop a volunteer network to increase capacity and therefore localised action
 - o Providing named contacts and introductions at local schools
 - o Encouraging schools to engage and take up the support offered

91. Work Programme

The Committee considered its draft work programme for 2022-23.

Matthew Evans, Democratic Services Officer, attended the meeting to introduce the report, and assisted the Panel in its deliberations.

The Panel was content that its future work programme be left for discussion at its first meeting in the new municipal year, subject to input and suggestions from Officers.

RESOLVED that: the contents of the work programme be noted.

Environment and Sustainability Panel

24 May 2023

Present:

Councillor Tracey Arnold
Councillor Molly Bloomfield
Councillor Pam Cox
Councillor Paul Dundas
Councillor Andrew Ellis
Councillor Mark Goacher
Councillor Sue Lissimore
Councillor Venessa Moffat
Councillor Steph Nissen
Councillor Natalie Sommers

Substitutes:

Also present:

92. Appointment of Chair

RESOLVED that: Councillor Nissen be elected Chair for the forthcoming municipal year.

93. Appointment of Deputy Chair

RESOLVED that: Councillor Arnold be elected Deputy Chair for the forthcoming municipal year.

22 June 2023

Report of	Strategic Director of Place and Prosperity	Author	Ben Plummer
Title	Introduction and overview of work on Environment and Sustainability		
Wards affected	Not applicable		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report aims to introduce and remind members of the Council's work on tackling the climate emergency and promoting sustainability and outlines upcoming priorities for the year.
- 1.2 In its declaration of a climate emergency, the Council has set a target to reach net zero operational carbon emissions by 2030. The Council's emissions are monitored annually, with the most recent calculations completed for financial year 21/22 showing the Council's emissions were 5,887.2 tonnes of CO₂e, a 10.1% reduction since 2018/19 (the baseline year set when the climate emergency was declared).
- 1.3 All of the Council's main projects and actions contributing to tackling the climate emergency and sustainability are reported on through the Climate Emergency Action Plan. This is made up of 9 themes and contains over 60 actions. Significant progress has been made with the actions in 2022/23 as shown with some examples below:
 - Identified opportunities for decarbonising and increasing the energy efficiency of 6 of the Council's highest emitting buildings including Leisure World.
 - Procurement of six electric vans for the Council fleet, adding to four hybrid vehicles used by the Helpline service and the five electric vehicles being used by North Essex Parking Partnership.
 - Installing signs at several of the Council's green spaces to explain the Council's no mowing approaches between March-September on these sites in order to support the growth of wildflowers and grasses to support pollinators and other insects.
 - Opening of the secure bike park in Portal Precinct, providing 23 bookable spaces for bikes to be locked in a pin coded facility with the building also soon to house pay as you go electric and electric cargo bikes, as well as having Colchester Bike Kitchen neighbouring it.
 - Increasing awareness and engagement around air quality through the award-winning CAREless Pollution campaign and home burning campaign, to promote no idling and responsible burning respectively.
 - Collecting 110 used bikes through the Community Cycle project to donate out to residents and community groups.
 - Delivering Government funding to improve the energy efficiency of energy inefficient homes, where the residents are on low incomes/eligible benefits.

- 1.4 There are several key actions and projects for financial year 2023/24, to progress the work in the Climate Emergency Action Plan. Some of these are shown below:
- Developing a Carbon Reduction and Management Plan to identify costs, timelines and carbon and cost savings for implementing energy efficiency and decarbonisation measures at key CCC buildings. Alongside this will include an energy manager working to identify energy (and thus cost) savings in buildings and developing 'invest to save' business cases for these.
 - Using £310,770 of funding received from Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) to continue work on air quality, including increasing engagement with businesses, schools and residents. Funding will also be used to update the Cycle Colchester website to provide improved cycling advice and tips, including an update of the Cycle Colchester map to detail cycling routes in and around Colchester.
 - Continue the development of the Recycling and Waste Strategy that will help align the Council's waste collections with requirements of the Environment Act, alongside delivering a service that is more efficient and financially sustainable.
 - Work with Essex County Council to develop an Essex wide communications campaign to increase environmental awareness and promote actions to lower environmental impacts as well as delivering co-benefits like cost savings or improved health.
- 1.5 The Council has had its Climate Emergency Action Plan reviewed by not-for-profit organisation Climate Emergency UK in 2021/22. The organisation are now reviewing the climate action taken by all UK local authorities since 1st January 2019-31st March 2023, with results to be published in 'scorecards' in September 2023.

2. Recommended Decision

- 2.1 The Panel is asked to note the progress made on environment and sustainability, ask any questions about the Council's work on climate and environmental action and provide their thoughts on the work priorities for this agenda.

3. Reason for Recommended Decision

- 3.1 This report is provided for the purpose of updating members with work on environment and sustainability. There are no decisions to make, other than suggestions or comments on the work priorities identified for the climate and sustainability agenda.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 Not applicable

5. Background Information

- 5.1 The Council declared a climate emergency on 17th July 2019, setting a target to reach net zero operational emissions by 2030. Since then, significant work has been done to move this work forward and progress towards the target, alongside establishing other environmental actions that will help to reduce emissions and environmental impacts across Colchester.

Council emissions

- 5.2 The Council calculated its greenhouse gas emission footprint for financial year 2018/19, setting this as the baseline from which to measure progress. Emissions within financial year 2018/19 totalled 6,549.3 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO₂e). This unit is a common metric used for measuring greenhouse gas emissions.
- 5.3 All types of greenhouse gas emissions have varying impacts on climate change (known as their global warming potential), but for simplicity, we equal and report on our emissions in the terms of if they were all CO₂ (as this is the predominant emission type). The 'e' in CO₂e stands for equivalent and is used as the Council captures all the greenhouse gas emissions in its reporting as if they were equivalent to the global warming potential of CO₂. For further information on global warming potentials visit [here](#).
- 5.4 The Council's emission sources are below:
- Gas and electricity consumption in Council buildings (including estimates for working from home)
 - Fuel consumption from Council's fleet vehicles
 - Staff commuting and business travel.
 - Waste production in Council buildings (emissions associated with transporting waste)
 - Water consumption in Council buildings (emissions associated with supply and treatment of water)
- 5.5 The Council reports on its greenhouse gas emissions annually, with the most recent emission calculation completed for financial year 2021/22 (with 22/23 in progress). Emissions for financial year 2021/22 totalled 5,887.2 tCO₂e, a 10.1% reduction on emissions recorded in financial year 2018/19. A breakdown of emissions is shown in table 1.

Table 1: Colchester City Council emissions breakdown for financial year 2021/22

Emission source	Emissions in FY 2021/22 (tonnes of CO ₂ e)
Gas consumption in buildings (including working from home)	2695.02
Electricity consumption in buildings (including working from home)	1218.21
Fuel consumption from CCC fleet	1590.30
Staff commuting	44.70
Staff business travel	22.00
Water consumption in Council buildings	39.30

Waste production in Council buildings (transportation of waste)	377.62
Total	5887.2

Climate Emergency Action Plan

5.6 The Council's [Climate Emergency Action Plan](#) provides the structure and thematic areas that have been identified for tackling climate change and reducing environmental impacts across Colchester. The plan consists of 9 themes and over 60 actions. The 9 themes are:

1. Reduce emissions from our buildings and fleet.
2. Adapting to a changing climate
3. Produce renewable energy.
4. Enhance biodiversity and protect our environment.
5. Facilitate sustainable and active travel and improve air quality.
6. Provide sustainable waste management and support residents to reduce, reuse and recycle.
7. Enable partnerships and community action for sustainability.
8. Sustainable planning built environment and green economy.
9. Change the way we work to achieve our climate commitment.

5.7 Progress with actions in the action plan are monitored across the Council and reported to the Environment and Sustainability Panel. Progress made with actions in the action plan are outlined below:

Reduce carbon emissions from our buildings.

5.8 Key highlights from this theme include:

- Reported greenhouse gas emissions reduction of **10.1% between financial year 2018/19 (our baseline year) and financial year 2021/22**. Greenhouse gas reporting for financial year 2022/23 will be captured as part of the annual emissions reporting that is conducted between June-October 2023.
- Begun analysis of opportunities identified for **decarbonising and increasing the energy efficiency of 6 of the Council's highest emitting buildings** including Leisure World, Crematorium, Town Hall, Colchester Castle Museum, Natural History Museum and Hollytrees Museum. Work will continue in 2023 to create a plan identifying which measures should take place in each of the buildings, determine emission and cost savings, and to identify funding sources. This will align with wider asset management work, budget setting for 2023/24 and future years, and continue alongside aims to produce more energy savings in Council buildings in the short-term.
- **Completing decarbonisation of Rowan House**, the Council's main office, including the installation of an air source heat pump, roof insulation, LED lighting, mechanical ventilation and heat recovery system, alongside the installation of 12 electric vehicle charge points in the car park.

- **Procurement of six electric vans** for the Council fleet that will contribute to emissions reductions from the Council, adding to four hybrid vehicles used by the Helpline service and the five electric vehicles being used by North Essex Parking Partnership. The impact on the Council's emissions of introducing these electric vehicles will be captured for the first time in the Council's emissions report for financial year 2022/23.

Produce renewable energy.

5.9 Key highlights from this theme include:

- Continued progression of developing the **Northern Gateway Heat Network** to provide low carbon heat to 650 homes, nearly 35,000m² of commercial space and a health village. Now awaiting confirmation of when development build out will take place, with the design work of heat network completed ready to enable activation of installation when needed.
- Feasibility work for a **solar park and microgrid**, which will contribute to powering the Northern Gateway development with renewable electricity, has continued and is being progressed towards submitting a planning application in Autumn 2023.
- **Increasing our understanding of the potential of heat network (zones)** for providing heat to a range of buildings, keeping track with the Government's work on heat network zoning and its continued support of this form of heat generation.

Enhance biodiversity and protect our environment.

5.10 Key highlights from this theme include:

- **Introduction of 10 cheviot goats to Highwoods Country Park** to help graze scrub vegetation to support the restoration of a wildflower meadow. This supports Council objectives to 'rewild' and bring back more sites into natural forms of management.
- **Tree planting** delivered through Local Authority Treescape Fund and Queen's Green Canopy project, and supporting The Conservation Volunteers with the planting of a ['Miyawaki forest'](#) (also known as a 'tiny forest') at Unity Primary Academy.
- **Partnership with [Market Field Grows](#) for them to deliver tree planting activities** across the borough. The organisation's aim is to provide employment opportunities for young people with disabilities.
- **Installation of signage** at several of the Council's green spaces where no mowing is taking place between March-September in order to support the growth of wildflowers and grasses to support pollinators and other insects. This project has also worked to support Wivenhoe Town Council with their approach to 'no mow, no sow', where they are leaving verges to 'wild' and enable the growth of wildflowers.
- Continued trials and implementation of approaches to support biodiversity through changes to maintenance of green spaces through **ban on glyphosate-based products** (extended to Colchester Borough Homes maintained sites) and **reduction in mowing** on many green spaces.

Facilitate sustainable and active travel and improve air quality.

5.11 Key highlights from this theme include:

- **Progressing the £120,000 of partnership funded Fixing the Link “Phase 2” projects** to encourage walking between the main rail station and the City Centre, which includes the “trees in planters” installed in North Station Road, along with a key planting and lighting scheme on the Albert roundabout to be installed later in the 2023 planting season, working with Beth Chatto Gardens.
- **Worked with Essex County Council** to feedback information about active travel routes including the East-West cycle route from Lexden Road to East Hill, extension from East Hill to University and Greenstead route and other Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs).
- Supported the **ecargo bike delivery service with their Christmas delivery service trial**, enabling people to have their shopping delivered to their home for a small charge by eCargo bike. The trial helped replaced 61 miles of van deliveries, reducing emissions produced within the city centre. Work to build on the trial will continue in 2023, working with the City Centre BID and other organisations.
- **Over 30,000 miles collectively travelled by eCargo bikes** in the Council’s [eCargo bike library](#) by a range of organisations, with a refresh of eCargo bike champions and further short term loans of bikes provided.
- **Opening of the [secure bike park](#)** in Portal Precinct, providing 23 bookable spaces for bikes to be locked in a pin coded facility. Electric bikes and electric cargo bikes are also available to hire on a pay as you go basis, as well as Colchester Bike Kitchen being located next door, providing equipment and support to help people fix their bikes.
- Support provided to **local businesses and organisations with the development and implementation of workplace travel plans** to encourage more sustainable and active travel through the Colchester Travel Plan Club. Officers have continued to work with bus operators to secure discounts for Travel Plan Club members.
- **Over 100 adults in Colchester received free cycle training** to improve their cycling confidence. This availability of free training will continue in 2023, with more information available [here](#).
- **Offering Colchester’s first electric car club car** in Priory Street car park, enabling people to borrow the car as and when needed.
- **Successful trial of psychological based messaging to encourage no-idling** (vehicles not leaving their engines running) on Brook Street and Eastgates where vehicles are often stationary for long periods. This intervention increased vehicle engine switch offs by an increase of 11% on baseline figures at peak switch off rates.
- **Increased engagement and awareness about air quality through the [CAREless Pollution Campaign](#)**, working with 23 local schools to provide a school toolkit and other resources, collaborating with businesses such as McDonalds and charities such as St Helena Hospice, and developing a resident toolkit for improving knowledge about air quality. The project was ‘highly commended’ at the 2022 Edie Sustainability Leaders Awards in the ‘Consumer Engagement/Marketing campaign of the year’. Resources have also been developed through the [home burning campaign](#) to raise awareness of the pollution produced from wood burning stoves and open fires, in an effort to encourage residents to burn better fuels (such as well seasoned wood) and to burn less to help improve local air quality and reduce harm to human health.

Provide sustainable waste management and support residents to reduce, reuse and recycle.

5.12 Key highlights from this theme include:

- **Installation of 4 smart bins in Dedham** to help with litter management and to improve the efficiency of waste collections. The solar-powered bins have a compacting feature enabling more waste to be stored in them and can notify Council staff when the bins are almost full to indicate they need emptying.
- **Creation of litter picking hubs around Colchester**, that provide residents with litter picking equipment, hi-vis jackets and bin bags enabling them to pick up litter on-the-go.
- **Beginning the development of a new Recycling and Waste Strategy** to improve collections of waste around the borough, aligning this with actions to come out of the Government's Environment Act 2021.

Enable partnerships and community action for sustainability and low carbon development.

5.13 Key highlights from this theme include:

- **Supported 11 schools** as part of the Essex Schools Green Day 2022, a day dedicated for all schools to take part in environmental learning and awareness activities, by providing donated gardening and outdoor resources to them alongside giving several assemblies about climate change and the Council's climate action.
- **110 bikes donated** through the '[Community Cycle](#)' project that were repaired and are being given out to those local community groups and individuals most in need.
- **Strengthened partnership with University of Essex** on several projects, including work with schools on raising environmental awareness, no idling signage study evaluation, single use plastics reduction and coastal protection.
- **Delivery of the 16th year of Trees for Years**, to provide residents with trees and shrubs for their gardens that will help support biodiversity.
- **Presentation to Town and Parish Councils** about opportunities for them to tackle climate change and support offered throughout year to help with actions they wanted to implement to reduce their environmental impacts and greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Supported delivery of the 2nd Eco Festival** organised by En-Form and Eco Colchester. The Council had a presence at this event with several stalls promoting Council projects, as well as helping for the transportation of equipment and materials to and from the site using the Council's eCargo bikes.
- **Participation in the Climate Action Anchor working groups co-ordinated by the Essex Climate Action Commission**, to collaborate on plans for climate action across Essex with key organisations like University of Essex, NHS hospitals and other local authorities. The main action delivered in the past year through the group was the support provided to develop training for frontline workers on fuel poverty awareness to increase their awareness of ways they can help residents to reduce their bills, get access to grants for energy efficiency and be able to point them to further support available.

Sustainable planning built environment and green economy.

5.14 Key highlights from this theme include:

- Integrating 'planet' as one of the four themes of [Colchester's Economic Development Strategy 2022-2025](#), to ensure that work to support economic development within the borough considers its impact on the environment and how businesses can adapt to changing climate impacts and associated business markets.
- Supported and promoted the **net zero business support and business cost reduction programmes** delivered by the [Colchester Business Enterprise Agency](#) (COLBEA) that focussed on helping business to understand more about carbon emissions and their carbon footprints, and ways to cut their costs through reducing energy and waste, amongst other elements.
- Secured funding through Essex County Council for **professional retrofit training to be rolled out in Colchester**. The funding will enable local people to become qualified in different roles required to deliver retrofit to the required Publicly Available Specification (PAS) 2035 standards that Government are demanding to deliver retrofit funding. The Council will work with local training providers to deliver the training for the roles of retrofit co-ordinator (person with overall responsibility for each stage of project), retrofit advisor (deliverer of advice to householders or clients on different retrofit measures) and retrofit assessor (carrying out assessment of home to identify which measures may be suitable for the home).
- Delivery of **funding from Government for energy efficiency improvements for households on low incomes and living in energy inefficient homes**. Funding has come through two schemes; Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Scheme Phases 2 and 3, with total spends through both to be determined in the coming months.

Change the way we work to achieve our climate commitment.

5.15 Key highlights from this theme include:

- **Delivery of Dr Bike sessions at Shrub End Depot and at Staff Wellbeing Day**, to provide bike repairs to staff bikes and cycling related support to aid cycling to work. A **new cycle shelter** was also installed at Shrub End Depot to provide a more secure facility for staff to lock their bikes up whilst at work.
- Development of **e-learning training for staff to make them more aware of climate change and environmental issues**, the Council's role in reducing emissions and environmental impacts and linking this back to how staff can make a difference, both in their work role and at home, to reduce their environmental footprint. The training has been developed and is aimed to be launched from June 2023. Member training was held on the actions within the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan in September 2022 and a further session is scheduled for 11th July 2023.
- Running a **behaviour change campaign focussing on reducing quantities of printing completed and postage** sent by Council staff. This aimed to raise awareness of the alternatives to sending and sharing information by print and post that could help to reduce costs and environmental impacts such as the digital hybrid mail (Hi-mail) service, alongside enabling staff to collect information through digital formats rather than on paper forms.
- **Beginning the revision of the Council's Travel Plan** in light of changes to working patterns to ensure staff are provided with support to travel sustainably (by walking, cycling, public transport etc.) to and for work. The benefits provided by staff through

the travel plan include public transport discounts, a salary sacrifice scheme for bikes and the opportunity to use pool bikes (including electric bikes) for attending meetings, visits or events.

- **Environmental steps being taken by the Colchester Museums team**, including the repurposing and reuse of materials from old exhibitions into new exhibitions, reducing use of single use plastic materials in the museum shops, getting staff trained in 'carbon literacy' and starting an Environmental Champions group to identify ways for museum operations to become greener and how museums can be used to raise environmental awareness.

Priorities for 2023/24

5.16 There are several actions and projects which the Council is focussing on delivering in 2023/24 that have links to environment and sustainability. These are outlined below:

- **Developing a Carbon Reduction and Management Plan to detail energy efficiency and decarbonisation measures to complete within CCC buildings** including timelines for these works, costs and paybacks and greenhouse gas emission savings. This will be combined with work on the Council's annual greenhouse gas emission reporting and work to research opportunities for offsetting projects that could help the Council reach its net zero target by 2030. A recently recruited energy manager will also help to identify further energy savings through behavioural and technological changes in buildings, bringing about cost and carbon savings.
- Investigate opportunities to take onboard learning from the 'building with nature' project looking at the potential to **collect and use waste oyster shell to then be placed on the coastline with seeded oyster larvae at Mersea to accelerate the oyster reef formation**. These reefs have the potential to help act as a natural breakwater to counter sea level rise to slow coastal erosion and reduce storm damage.
- Continue to **build on learnings of 'No Mow approach' and implement at more Council green spaces where appropriate** to help with the naturalisation and less intensive maintenance of these spaces that can support biodiversity.
- Build on **masterplan for Cymbeline Meadows to be a nature reserve, including creating new habitats and management of the site to support biodiversity**.
- Using **£310,770 of funding received from Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) to continue work on air quality**, including funding resource for 2 officers; 1 to engage with businesses about sustainable travel and 1 to focus on community engagement with schools and residents about air quality. Funding will also go towards producing an up-to-date Cycle Colchester map showing cycle routes in and around Colchester, an update of the Cycle Colchester website, developing a short term eCargo bike loan scheme for residents alongside a 'Care for your air' e-learning module for businesses.
- Link in within Essex County Council and other partners to deliver active travel projects linked with the Town Deal work, including the **provision of 750 free bikes through the 'Pedal Power' scheme in Greenstead**.
- Support GO4 café and volunteers in Newtown to set up a **shared eCargo bike hub** for residents to access eCargo and electric bikes on a pay as you go basis.

- Support the introduction of an **electric bike pay as you go hire scheme** with Tier (escooter provider) to enable residents to have access to these for work and leisure journeys.
- **Use S106 contributions to develop projects to support walking and cycling in east Colchester**, including the 'Walking with Words' wayfinding project and looking to develop projects to make the King Edward Quay site at the Hythe more welcoming and interesting for students and others to use this area, and the links this has with walking and cycling routes to Wivenhoe and Rowhedge.
- **Delivering improvements identified along the Fixing the Link route** as detailed in paragraph 5.11.
- **Continue the development of the Recycling and Waste Strategy** that will help align the Council's waste collections with requirements of the Environment Act, alongside delivering a service that is more efficient and financially sustainable.
- Work with the University of Essex and the Business Improvement District (BID) to **identify ways to raise awareness and create support for businesses to reduce their use of single-use plastics**. Ideas being looked at are research into alternative materials to be used instead of single-use plastics for common plastic items used by businesses, creation of awareness materials and an award scheme for businesses taking action to reduce their use of single-use plastics.
- Work with **Essex County Council and other public sector partners with the creation of an Essex wide communications campaign** to increase environmental awareness and promote actions that can be taken to reduce environmental impacts, along with other co-benefits such as saving money and improving health.
- Developing **three new supplementary planning documents (SPDs) on active travel, climate change and biodiversity**. These SPDs all help to outline expected best practice in terms of environmental sustainability. The biodiversity SPD is finishing its consultation and went to Local Plan Committee on 12th June for approval. The other two SPDs are nearing the final draft stage.
- **Supporting delivery of further domestic energy efficiency grant schemes** such as phase 4 of the Energy Company Obligation Flex (ECO4) scheme and phase 2 of the Home Upgrade Grant (HUG2) scheme. The Office for gas and electricity markets (Ofgem) hold the funding for ECO4 which is sourced from medium and large energy suppliers who are obligated to provide measures to support low-income, fuel poor and vulnerable households with reducing energy use. HUG2 is a government funded scheme, specifically focussing on improving the energy efficiency and decarbonisation of homes off the gas grid (i.e. their main heating fuel isn't gas). The Council has identified target areas within the borough to receive this funding based on the eligibility criteria and data available to map this out. Marketing for this scheme hopes to start in August/September 2023.

Climate Action Review

- 5.17 In 2021/22, Colchester City Council, along with all other UK Councils, had its Climate Emergency Action Plan [rated](#) by [Climate Emergency UK](#), a not for profit organisation acting as a critical friend to support the public sector with climate action and hold them accountable. Upon this review, the Council published a refreshed version of its Climate Emergency Action Plan in January 2023, taking on feedback from this review.
- 5.18 In 2023, Climate Emergency UK have been reviewing climate and environmental action completed by all UK Councils from 1st January 2019 – 31st March 2023. They have [developed criteria](#) for which to assess action, with these differing based on the level of

local government. Each Council will then receive a 'climate action scorecard' showing how it has performed, and this can be compared with other local authorities. It is expected that the scorecards will be published in September 2023, and the Council will complete an evaluation of the results and take on board any feedback and explore any actions that could be carried out as part of the action plan review at the end of 2023/beginning of 2024.

6. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

6.1 This report has no equality, diversity and human rights implications.

7. Strategic Plan References

7.1 Within the updates on actions provided, there are links to the below themes of the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan:

- Tackling the climate challenge and leading sustainability
- Improve health, wellbeing and happiness.
- Grow our economy so everyone benefits.

8. Consultation

8.1 There are no consultation considerations for this report.

9. Publicity Considerations

9.1 There are no specific publicity considerations.

10. Financial implications

10.1 There are no specific financial implications from this report.

11. Health, Wellbeing and Community Safety Implications

11.1 With the actions provided in the updates, the Council is trying to improve health and wellbeing through the actions it is taking to improve environmental outcomes. The 'co-benefits' of environmental action are well documented. For example, improving the management of our green spaces for biodiversity can bring enjoyment and mental health benefits for residents, supporting residents to cycle more improves both their physical and mental health and increasing the energy efficiency of homes helps to improve thermal comfort and physical health.

11.2 There are no community safety implications from this report.

12. Health and Safety Implications

12.1 There are no health and safety implications from this report.

13. Risk Management Implications

13.1 There are no risk management implications from this report.

14. Environmental and Sustainability Implications

- 14.1 The actions that have been undertaken as outlined in the report have been taken so as to help reduce environmental impacts and emissions across the Council and Colchester. Some of these actions will have embedded impacts on the environment and emissions (for example the production of eCargo bikes), but the Council would try and weigh these impacts up against those of the alternative (for example using fossil fuel powered cars/vans for deliveries).

22 June 2023

Report of	Strategic Director of Place and Prosperity	Author	Ben Plummer
Title	Climate Emergency Action Plan Update		
Wards affected	Not applicable		

1. Executive Summary

1.1 This report details key progress and updates from actions in the [Climate Emergency Action Plan](#) (CEAP), and other relevant updates since the last meeting on 21st March 2023.

1.2 Key highlights include:

- The production of the **Carbon Cutting Essex** app by Essex County Council that provides tips and advice to inform residents about how they can cut their carbon footprint. The app will provide quizzes, videos, blogs and pledges which residents can complete to get points which can be put towards rewards or donated to charities.
- Opening of the **Secure Bike Park** in Portal Precinct, providing space for residents to lock their bike in a pin coded facility for £1 per day. The facility will also house an electric bike and electric cargo bike pay as you go scheme, with Colchester Bike Kitchen neighbouring it, providing tools and support to help people fix their own bikes.
- Approval of planning permission for the **Newtown Bike Hub**, that will provide 3 electric cargo bikes that residents can rent out.
- A proposal is being developed to replace the current sand **filtration system at Leisure World with an innovative system** which works by cleaning and returning heated pool water instead of filtering the heated water and flushing to drain thus saving water as well as the energy required to heat the pool top-up water.
- An **Energy Manager** has been appointed to analyse the Council's energy usage and identify ways to monitor and reduce energy use in buildings to operate more efficiently.
- A **planning application** is being developed for the creation of the **solar farm and microgrid** at Seven Saints Farm that will progress this project to supply renewable electricity to the Northern Gateway development.
- Participating in a **project to increase the collection of food waste** from properties with wheeled bins. The pilot is being co-ordinated by Essex County Council, using communications and bin stickers to reduce food waste being disposed of in general waste wheeled bins.
- Delivery of over **£300,000 of funding** for energy efficiency improvements for private sector homes through the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Scheme Phase 3.

- Securing funding as part of a consortium for delivery of energy efficiency improvements for private sector homes off the gas grid through the **Home Upgrade Grant Phase 2**.
- Securing over **£1m of funding** from the **Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund** for energy efficiency improvements to the 105 of the lowest energy performing properties in the housing stock.
- Continued availability of **free adult cycle training** of varying levels from beginner to advanced level training, to improve cycling confidence and understanding of how to cycle safely.
- Return of the **Eco Festival on 2nd September 2023** in Lower Castle Park, providing stalls and activities for people to learn more about ways they can live greener lifestyles. The Council will attend this event with a range of stalls on its environmental projects and work.

2. Recommended Decision

- 2.1 The Panel is asked to note the contents of the report and ask any questions they have about the updates provided or progress of any actions in the Climate Emergency Action Plan.

3. Reason for Recommended Decision

- 3.1 To ensure that the Panel is content with the progress made to date and has the chance to feedback on ongoing work.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 Not applicable.

5. Background Information

Key updates

Carbon Cutting Essex App

- 5.1 Essex County Council have launched an app in collaboration with [Green Redeem](#) to help residents understand more about their carbon footprint and what actions they can take to lower it through lifestyle changes. The 'Carbon Cutting Essex' app will provide quizzes, blogs, videos and other activities on a weekly basis on a variety of different topics including food, waste, energy and transport. In return for completing activities, residents get 'points' which can be redeemed for rewards such as vouchers, entry into prize draws or donated to charities. The Carbon Cutting Essex app can be downloaded from the App Store, Google Play or the [Green Redeem website](#). CCC will ensure the app is promoted internally to staff as well as to town and parish councils and communities.

Secure Bike Park

- 5.2 The [Secure Bike Park](#) in Portal Precinct in the City Centre has opened with 23 bookable spaces for bikes to be locked up. Residents can now book a space to lock up their bike in the pin locked facility (with CCTV installed outside too) using the [Spokesafe](#) app. Bikes can be locked up at a cost of £1 per day with differing rates for weekly and monthly use. Additionally, electric bikes and electric cargo bikes will shortly be available for residents to hire on a pay as you go basis from this facility. [Colchester Bike Kitchen](#) are also in the neighbouring building to the secure bike park, providing support to help people fix and maintain the condition of their own bikes on Wednesday evenings and Saturday afternoons.

Newtown Bike Hub

- 5.3 Planning permission has been approved for the installation of a bike shelter to store 3 electric cargo bikes for the Newtown Bike Hub scheme. The bikes will be available for residents to rent, with the bike hub being managed by the community including GO4 café and other volunteers. More information about a launch date for the hub will be circulated with councillors when available.

Water filtration system at Leisure World

- 5.4 A proposal being is developed to replace the current sand filtration system at Leisure World with an innovative system. This system would work by cleaning and returning heated pool water to the pools instead of filtering the heated water and flushing to drain. By doing this, the system would reduce water use as well as the energy required to heat the pool top-up water.

Energy Manager

- 5.5 An Energy Manager has recently started in post at the Council, with the aim of implementing systems to better monitor energy use in Council buildings as well as identifying opportunities to reduce energy use through behavioural and technological actions. With bills rising, this role is an important step to help the Council save money as well as cutting greenhouse gas emissions.

Solar Farm planning permission

- 5.6 The Council is working with the consultant Push Energy to produce a planning application for the creation of a solar farm and microgrid at Seven Saints Farm. This would provide renewable electricity to the Northern Gateway development, providing the development with greener electricity, and providing a revenue stream for the Council through the sale of electricity to end users.

Food waste recycling project

- 5.7 The Council is participating in a project coordinated by Essex County Council that aims to increase the recycling of food waste, minimising the amount that is put in residual waste. This project is taking place across Colchester in June-July 2023 in properties that have wheeled bin collections for general waste. Each property would now have received compostable food waste liners, an information leaflet and a 'no food waste' sticker to be placed on the general waste bin, to encourage the behaviour change to avoid food waste being placed in general waste bins.

Domestic Energy Efficiency

- 5.8 The Council has delivered over £300,000 of funding to improve the energy efficiency of properties where residents were on low incomes and living in energy inefficient properties. This funding has gone towards installing a range of energy efficiency measures including cavity wall insulation, loft insulation, solar photovoltaic (PV) panels and more. These improvements were funded through the Government funded Local Authority Delivery Scheme Phase 3 (LAD3), part of the overall [Sustainable Warmth Competition](#). The scheme has closed, with spend on the scheme being finalised and this will be shared with councillors when appropriate.
- 5.9 Building on the funding distributed in LAD3, the Council has been successful as part of a consortium of other local authorities in receiving funding from the Government's [Home Upgrade Grant Scheme Phase 2](#) (HUG2). This funding will be spent between Autumn 2023-March 2025 to improve the energy efficiency of, and to decarbonise properties that, are off the gas grid (i.e. main fuel for heating is not gas such as coal or oil) and where residents are on low incomes or receive eligible benefits. The scheme will be targeted at key areas in Colchester where residents are most likely to be eligible based on the parameters set out by Government, to improve the locality of delivery. CCC staff will be in contact with relevant councillors within target areas in due course to help with promotion of the scheme to residents.
- 5.10 The Council has received just over £1m from the Government's [Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund](#) to improve the energy efficiency of the lowest energy performing homes in the housing stock. These improvements will make 105 homes more environmentally friendly, whilst also reducing energy bills for the residents.

Free Adult Cycle Training

- 5.11 Essex County Council are continuing to provide access to free adult cycle training, to improve cycling confidence. These 1:1 sessions range from the 'adult learn to ride' sessions for adults at a beginner riding level to 'adult advanced cycling' which gives users advice on road positioning, cycling on faster roads and at junctions and roundabouts. Completing the 'adult advanced cycling' training is a condition of being able to use the pay as you go electric bike and electric cargo bikes in the secure bike park, as

well as for staff to use any of the Council's electric and electric cargo bikes. Find out more information, including the registration form for sessions [here](#).

Eco Festival

- 5.12 The [Eco Festival](#) is taking place for the 3rd year running in Lower Castle Park on 2nd September 2023 from 11am-6pm. The free event aims to raise awareness of environmental actions people can take to live more sustainably. There will be stalls from local businesses, charities and organisations all providing information to residents on what they're doing for the environment and how residents can help, alongside a range of different activities and music for all ages. The Council will be in attendance at the event, talking about several of our environmental projects including biodiversity, waste and recycling and active travel projects. More promotion about the event will come out as the date approaches.

6. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

- 6.1 This report has no equality, diversity and human rights implications.

7. Strategic Plan References

- 7.1 All of the updates provided in this report contribute to the Strategic Plan 2023-2026 theme of 'Respond to the climate emergency'.

8. Consultation

- 8.1 There are no consultation considerations for this paper, although several of the projects referenced have consultation elements within them and success in tackling climate change will involve engagement and education of others to influence behaviour change more widely.

9. Publicity Considerations

- 9.1 There are no specific publicity considerations.

10. Financial implications

- 10.1 There are no direct financial implications of the updates provided in this report.

11. Health, Wellbeing and Community Safety Implications

- 11.1 Several of the updates in this report include benefits to health and wellbeing such as the delivery of grant funding for improving the energy efficiency of domestic properties that will help increase comfort and reduce the instance of illness associated with cold homes. Providing more facilities, and access to training, to support cycling will also help encourage more residents to cycle more which can benefit physical and mental health.
- 11.2 There are no anticipated impacts on community safety from the project updates presented in this report.

12. Health and Safety Implications

- 12.1 There are no health and safety implications from this report.

13. Risk Management Implications

13.1 There are no risk management implications from this update.

14. Environmental and Sustainability Implications

14.1 The project updates in this report all aim to reduce emissions and environmental impacts across the Council. Many of the projects aim to reduce energy use to increase energy efficiency. There are some projects that will have an embedded carbon impact (for example the materials to create the solar farm), but the design of this project has been considered for the beneficial environmental impacts it can deliver such as the renewable electricity output as well as potential to create wildflower areas between panels to support biodiversity.

Environment and Sustainability Panel

Item
9

22 June 2023

Report of	Assistant Director Corporate and Improvement Services	Author	Matthew Evans ☎ ext. 8006
Title	Work Programme 2023-2024		
Wards affected	Not applicable		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out the current Work Programme 2023-2024 for the Environment and Sustainability Panel. This provides details of the reports that are scheduled for each meeting during the municipal year.

2. Recommended Decision

- 2.1 The Panel is asked to note the contents of the Work Programme for 2023-2024.

3. Reason for Recommended Decision

- 3.1 The Work Programme of this Panel is kept under review throughout the municipal year to ensure that business is progressed and Members have the opportunity to review upcoming agenda items.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 This function forms part of the Panel's Terms of Reference and, as such, no alternative options are presented.

5. Background Information

- 5.1 The Environment and Sustainability Panel deals with existing and emerging environmental issues, and will focus on carbon footprint reduction and monitoring and supporting the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan.
- 5.2 The Panel's Work Programme will evolve as the Municipal Year progresses and items of business are commenced and concluded. At each meeting the opportunity is taken for the Work Programme to be reviewed and, if necessary, amended according to current circumstances.

6. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

6.1 This report has no equality, diversity and human rights implications.

7. Strategic Plan References

7.1 Environmental Sustainability is integral to the delivery of the Strategic Plan's priorities and direction for the Borough as set out under the four themes of growth, responsibility, opportunity and wellbeing.

8. Consultation

8.1 There are no consultation considerations for this report.

9. Publicity Considerations

9.1 There are no specific publicity considerations.

10. Financial implications

10.1 There are no specific financial implications from this report.

11. Health, Wellbeing and Community Safety Implications

11.1 With the actions provided in the updates, the Council is trying to improve health and wellbeing through the actions it is taking to improve environmental outcomes. The 'co-benefits' of environmental action are well documented. For example, improving the management of our green spaces for biodiversity can bring enjoyment and mental health benefits for residents, supporting residents to cycle more improves both their physical and mental health and increasing the energy efficiency of homes helps to improve thermal comfort and physical health.

11.2 There are no community safety implications from this report.

12. Health and Safety Implications

12.1 There are no health and safety implications from this report.

13. Risk Management Implications

13.1 There are no risk management implications from this report.

14. Environmental and Sustainability Implications

14.1 There are no specific environmental and sustainability implications arising directly from this report.

WORK PROGRAMME 2023-24

Environment and Sustainability Panel
Meeting date / Agenda items -
Environment and Sustainability Panel - 22 June 2023
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Overview/Introduction of Climate Emergency Action Plan and key progress. 2. Climate Emergency Action Plan – progress update.
Environment and Sustainability Panel – 20 July 2023
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Climate Emergency Action Plan – Progress Update
Environment and Sustainability Panel – 21 September 2023
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Woodland and Biodiversity update 2. Greenhouse gas report review 3. Climate Emergency Action Plan update
Environment and Sustainability Panel – 06 December 2023
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Carbon Management Plan 2. Draft Recycling and Waste Strategy 3. Review of fleet transition 4. Climate Emergency Action Plan update
Environment and Sustainability Panel – 08 February 2024
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Housing and Sustainability 2. Climate Emergency Action Plan update

Environment and Sustainability Panel – **21 March 2024**

1. Air Quality Projects update
2. Active and Sustainable Travel projects update
3. Climate Emergency Action Plan update/Summary of the year