

22<sup>nd</sup> June 2022

Report of	Assistant Director of Place and Client Services	Author	Ben Plummer ☎ 508965
Title	Overview of progress on Environment and Sustainability		
Wards affected	All		

## 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report reminds members of the Council's work on tackling the climate emergency and outlines some upcoming priorities for the year. Another report published alongside with this Agenda covers short term progress made between April-June 2022 on key projects in the Climate Emergency Action Plan.
- 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 20/21 showing the Council's emissions were 5,406 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e, a 17.4% 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 are reported on through the Climate Emergency Action Plan. This is made up of 8 themes and contains over 50 actions. Significant progress has been made with the actions in 2021/22 as shown with some examples below:
  - Involvement of 400 volunteers in the planting of 20,000 trees on Council green spaces as part of the Woodland and Biodiversity Project
  - Continuing vehicle fleet transition with the purchase of 5 fully electric vehicles for the North Essex Parking Partnership (and the introduction of hybrids for other services including Helpline)
  - Over 100,000 miles travelled on eCargo bikes as part of Colchester eCargo bike library project
  - Installation of 3 electric vehicle charge points in Priory Street Car Park
  - Extensive marketing and awareness raising of the Council's CAREless Pollution Campaign and signage installed in town centre to improve air quality in Colchester.
  - Investment in 4 smart waste bins as part of a trial to test the effectiveness of these bins for collection efficiencies
- 1.4 There are several key priorities for financial year 2022/23, to progress the work in the Climate Emergency Action Plan. These are shown below:
  - Creation of a new Carbon Management Plan to identify opportunities for reducing carbon emissions at high emitting assets such as Leisure World, and our heritage buildings such as Colchester Castle and the Town Hall.
  - Work to support active travel in Colchester, including the creation of the secure cycle park, shared travel hubs and electric car club.

- Developments on several key strategies that link strongly to the climate emergency including the Blue and Green Infrastructure Strategy and Waste and Recycling Strategy
- Working in partnership with Essex County Council on sustainable travel and understanding an approach to supporting the electric vehicle transition in Colchester.

## **2. Recommended Decision**

- 2.1 The Panel is asked to note the contents of the report summarising progress on environment and sustainability, and review and comment on the Council's related priorities for the coming year.

## **3. Reason for Recommended Decision**

- 3.1 To note the progress made to date relating and to provide any feedback on work carried out so far.

## **4. Alternative Options**

- 4.1 Not Applicable

## 5. Background information

- 5.1 The Council declared a climate emergency on 17<sup>th</sup> 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.

### Council Emissions

- 5.2 The Council calculated its baseline operational emissions in financial year 2018/19 which totalled 6,549.3 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e. The emission sources from the Council considered within this are:

- Gas and electricity consumption in Council buildings
- Fuel consumption from Council buildings
- Staff commuting and business travel
- Waste production in Council buildings (emissions associated with transporting waste)
- Water consumption in Council buildings (emissions associated with treatment of water)

- 5.3 The most recent emissions calculation for financial year 2020/21, showed emissions in that year were 5,406.4 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e, which is a 17.4% reduction (since 2018/19). A breakdown of these emissions is shown below.

Table 1: Colchester Borough Council emissions breakdown for financial year 2020/21

Emission source	Emissions in FY 2020/21 (tonnes of CO <sub>2</sub> e)
Gas consumption in buildings (including WFH)	2620.4
Electricity consumption in buildings (including WFH)	1,093.1
Fuel consumption from CBC fleet	1,456.6
Staff commuting	30.8
Staff business travel	68.9
Water consumption in Council buildings	23.1
Waste production in Council buildings (transportation of waste)	113.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,406.4</b>

- 5.4 Additionally, there are several emission sources indirectly associated with the Council's operations that are estimated using the best available data. This includes emissions from the Council's procured goods and services, the Council's housing stock, leased buildings. More information about the Council's emissions can be found [here](#).

### Climate Emergency Action Plan

- 5.5 The Council's [Climate Emergency Action Plan](#) provides the structure and outlines the action areas for tackling the climate emergency. The plan is made up of 8 themes and over 50 actions. The 8 themes are:

1. Reducing emissions from our buildings and fleet to help achieve a net zero carbon footprint by 2030
2. Produce renewable energy
3. Enhance biodiversity and protect our environment
4. Facilitate walking, cycling and sustainable transport around Colchester
5. Provide sustainable waste management and support residents to reduce, reuse and recycle
6. Enable partnerships and community action for sustainability and low carbon development
7. Ensure sustainable planning and development
8. Change the way we work to achieve our climate commitment

5.6. Progress with actions in the action plan is monitored across the Council and reported to the Environment and Sustainability Panel. Significant progress was made with actions the plan in 2021/22, outlined below:

### **Reduce carbon emissions from our buildings and fleet**

5.7 Key highlights from this theme include:

- Reported emissions reduction of **12.8% between financial year 2019/20 and financial year 2020/21**. Covid-19 impacted these emissions, but it did help us to understand the difference home working and a reduction in commuting can make to our emissions.
- Updating our **emissions pathway to 2030**, identifying the difference planned actions will make to our emissions and understanding where gaps exist for further emissions reductions to occur.
- Beginning the **transition to electric vehicles (EVs)**, with the purchase of 4 hybrid vehicles that arrived in January 2022, with 6 electric vehicles arriving in June 2022, and a further 13 small vehicles to after that when infrastructure is available. 10 EV charge points have also been installed in St John's Car park for charging council vehicles, along with a further 12 charge points in Rowan House car park when fully completed by the end of June 2022.
- Development of a **Housing Asset Management Strategy**, which outlined the target for all Council owned homes to reach a minimum EPC rating of C by 2030.
- Start of the process to **rebuild Elfreda House to Future Homes Standard**, due for completion in May 2023.

### **Produce renewable energy**

5.8 Key highlights from this theme include:

- Furthering the development of the **Northern Gateway Heat Network** to the stage where post contract negotiations are underway for the contract award to build the central energy centre and network infrastructure to link the network to buildings that will be part of the Northern Gateway development.
- Budgeted £5.76m for the creation of a **solar park and microgrid** subject to a detailed business case being developed, which will contribute to powering the Northern Gateway development with renewable energy.

### **Enhance biodiversity and protect our environment**

5.9 Key highlights from this theme include:

- Planting of 20,000 trees on 11 different Council green spaces as part of the **Woodland and Biodiversity Project** during the Winter 21/22 planting season. Over 400 people have volunteered to help plant the trees. A further 23,000 have been delivered to parish councils, local schools and landowners. The project has managed to engage with a variety of stakeholders including town and parish councils, local schools, community organisations such as Together We Grow CIC and Refugee Action Colchester, and residents some of which have become highly involved in the project as tree guardians.
- Successful trials of **changes to mowing regimes and phasing out of glyphosate** on some Council green spaces. Wivenhoe Town Council also took part in this trial, identifying 150 different wildflower species and 3-29 more flowers in the unmown areas compared to mown. The trials are being reviewed and will continue to be delivered in 2022.

## Facilitate walking, cycling and sustainable transport around Colchester

### 5.10 Key highlights from this theme include:

- Delivering the **Colchester eCargo bike library project** to promote eCargo bikes as a viable option for organisations and businesses to use for their deliveries and options instead of cars or vans. Over 100,000 miles have been travelled by project champions, Council officers and other organisations and individuals who have been using the bikes on short term loans. The launch of the eCargo bike delivery project has been significant for engaging with local businesses and charities in Colchester to arrange to make deliveries by eCargo bike for them.
- Increasing the awareness of air quality and the impact of no idling across Colchester through the **CAREless Pollution campaign** and signage trials to promote no idling. The CAREless Pollution campaign has engaged with businesses, schools, religious groups and has been shown at a variety of community events, earning it a 'Highly Commended' award in the 'Consumer Engagement/Marketing Campaign of the Year' category at the Edie Sustainability Leaders Awards. Evaluation of the first 8 months of the signage trial show behavioural changes occurring, with a 9% increase in engine switch-offs in some locations.
- Progressing the creation of a **secure cycle park** in the town centre to provide a highly safe place for residents to store their bikes while visiting the town. Within the secure cycle park, will also be a shared bike hub for residents to access electric bikes and eCargo bikes on a pay as you go basis. Both projects are hoped to be finished by Summer 2022.
- Improvements and updates to the route from North Station to the Town Centre as part of **Fixing the Link** project. Plans are in progress to refurbish the Middleborough fountain, plant trees in planters, as well as replace the yellow flags that line the route.
- Supporting the development of the **Colchester Orbital**, with the creation of online maps showing the 14-15 mile walking and cycling route being produced.
- Facilitating the operation of the **e-scooter trials** in Colchester which have seen over 300,000 journeys completed in the urban area since February 2021.
- Installation of 3 EV charge points at **Priory Street Car Park** as the start of a programme to support the use of electric vehicles in Colchester, with more charge points going in other Council car parks in 2022.

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

### **5.11 Key highlights from this theme include:**

- Introduced programme to **reduce recycling contamination** and save time on waste collection routes by collecting cans and glass in separate containers
- Creation of a **community engagement team** to engage with residents and schools about waste reduction and recycling. The team have helped school children be involved in naming one of the Council's food waste vehicles, and are helping to restart the Council's Litter Warriors programme, with expansion to allow residents to carry out other tasks such as weeding of paths.
- Beginning the **investment in smart waste technology**, with the introduction of 4 smart waste bins in Dedham to help improve collection efficiencies and store more waste in bins. This will begin as a trial and the effectiveness assessed to inform future deployment.

## **Enable partnerships and community action for sustainability and low carbon development**

### **5.7 Key highlights from this theme include:**

- Supporting Eco Colchester with the delivery of the **Eco Festival** in 2021. This event attracted over 3500 of attendees, and gave the Council a great opportunity to showcase its projects that are contributing to sustainability in the borough.
- Building **collaboration with University of Essex** to help inform the development of our Council projects. Collaborations include on the Clean Air for Colchester project and Go Green Schools project, as well as through other one-off engagement projects such as through the University Challenge Lab.
- **Increase engagement with primary schools** to understand the challenges face in becoming greener, and carry out environmental engagement activities with one school in Colchester to enable staff and students to understand the benefits of outdoor environmental activity. Through this work, the Council has managed to link up the school with further ongoing support through Together We Grow CIC.
- Work with Community 360 and other **community-based organisations** such as Age Concern, Warm and Toasty Club and Citizen's Advice Bureau to promote some of the Council's projects and activities such as the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Scheme funding to a wider audience.
- Deliver a presentation and Q and A session with the **Colchester Association of Local Councils** about the Council's work on the climate emergency, and how town and parish councils can be linked into this and take their own action to reduce their environmental impact. Regular communication now happens between the town and parish councils and CBC to ensure they are kept up to date with CBC projects and activities that they can publicise to residents.

## **Ensure sustainable planning and development**

### **5.8 Key highlights from this theme include:**

- Creation of the **Planning Sustainability Checklist** to help planning staff assess the sustainability of planning applications going forward. This is useful guidance for ensuring

planning applications are taking due consideration to the impact they can have on the environment.

- Working alongside the sustainable travel team, to ensure **£106 funding** has been allocated to accommodate and support sustainable travel as part of new developments. This has included the allocated of spaces for electric car clubs and electric vehicle charge points amongst others.
- Commitment to work on creating a sustainability and climate change supplementary planning document to provide further guidance on the interpretation of the local plan that emphasises how developments can be built more sustainably and with due consideration of future climate change impacts.

## **Change the way we work to achieve our climate commitment**

### **5.9 Key highlights from this theme include:**

- Creation of the **Sustainability and Carbon Reduction Assessment** (and guidance) that has helped staff to provide further information on how their projects are reducing their negative environmental impacts and producing positive environmental impacts.
- Provided input into the development of **several key strategies** at the Council including the Housing Asset Management Strategy, Cultural Strategy and Communities Can Strategy.
- Developing the **Council's travel plan** through engaging with staff working across Colchester including Rowan House and Shrub End Depot, to understand how staff anticipate travelling to work in the future and to continue to work to provide support for staff to travel sustainably to work. Significant engagement has been carried out at Shrub End Depot, providing Dr Bike maintenance sessions and recently helping to purchase a new covered bike shed to store bikes.

5.10 The Council is currently in the process of reviewing the action plan, updating existing actions and adding in new actions for 2022/23. It is expected a draft of this document will be available to share in September 2022.

## **Priorities for 2022/23**

5.11 There are several key actions that the Council intends to progress this year as priorities which are outlined below:

- Creation of a new Carbon Management Plan to identify opportunities for reducing emissions at key high emitting assets including Leisure World, Colchester Castle and the Town Hall. This work is starting in June 2022, with the plan expected to be produced by November 2022. This will be an important step in furthering the Council's understanding of how it can reach net zero operational emissions by 2030.
- Continue to work with partners on the borough on solutions to respond climate change. For example, the Council will be working with the University of Essex on two projects on oyster conservation and the circular economy, plus one on reducing business use of single use plastics in the town centre. The Council will also continue work with the Essex Climate Commission to explore developments being made with work identified in their report, including participating in discussions about the climate focus area and initiatives that can take place within it to reduce environmental impacts.

- Exploring further opportunities to enable communities to take environmental action at the local level, through sharing knowledge and contacts to increase the communities capacity to take on environmental projects, supporting an asset-based development approach. For example, the Council will be exploring with local communities the potential for them to set up local bike hubs/bike kitchens to support active travel.
- Development of several strategies that will contribute significantly to reducing environmental impacts across the borough. These include the Waste and Recycling Strategy, Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy and working alongside Essex County Council to consider the Council's approach to supporting the electric vehicle transition.
- Continue to support residents to use active travel options to move around Colchester, with the creation of the secure cycle park, shared bike hubs and pay as you go electric car club.
- Build on knowledge gained from park and charge pilot at Priory Street Car Park, to think about a strategy for the allocation of electric vehicle charge points throughout the borough.
- Explore ideas identified in the Positive Parking Strategy, thinking how these could link to environmental benefits (e.g. promoting out of town centre parking using variable tariffs to improve air quality). This would be a holistic piece alongside the work on town centre master planning, electric vehicle charging and the work on active travel being considered above.
- Development of a climate change and sustainability supplementary planning document (SPD) to provide more guidance to the interpretation of the local plan and be used as a material consideration in the consideration of planning applications.
- Increase understanding of opportunities to reduce our emissions through offsetting. The Council is beginning to work with Anthesis Group who have been developing a concept called '[Authority Based Insetting](#)' which could provide the opportunity for the Council to collaborate with other organisations in the borough to invest in carbon reduction projects that help to meet multiple organisation's carbon reduction targets at a local scale.
- Gain more knowledge about how the Council can embed adapting to climate change as part of actions within the action plan. This includes thinking about the climate change risks (e.g. drought, flooding, extreme weather) and establishing actions that can help mitigate against these (such as exploring the potential of oyster conservation to help mitigate coastal erosion, a project being worked on with the University of Essex).

## **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 2020-2023 theme of 'Tackling the Climate Challenge and Sustainability'.

## **8. Consultation**

- 8.1 There are no consultation considerations.

## **9. Publicity Considerations**

- 9.1 There are no specific publicity considerations.



## **10. Financial implications**

10.1 There are no specific financial implications from this paper.

## **11. Community Safety Implications**

11.1 There are no specific community safety implications from this paper.

## **12. Health and Safety Implications**

12.1 There are no health and safety implications.

## **13. Risk Management Implications**

13.1 There are no risk management implications from this update.

## **14. Environmental and Sustainability Implications**

14.1 All of the Council's activities highlighted in the report contribute to reducing the environmental impact of the Council and/or the borough.