

02 November 2022

Report of	Assistant Director of Place and Client Services	Author	Ben Plummer ☎ 508965
Title	Draft Climate Emergency Action Plan – New iteration		
Wards affected	All		

## 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Council's initial Climate Emergency Action Plan was replaced by an [updated version](#) in June 2021. This introduced the Council's eight themes of the action plan and gave more detail as to how the Council was responding to the climate emergency.
- 1.2 A new version of the Climate Emergency Action Plan has now been drafted (see appendix 1), updating actions from the previous plan and adding in new actions. Improvements have been made also to the design and level of content within the document based on the review of the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan by Climate Emergency UK in January 2022.
- 1.3 The purpose of the report is to introduce the new plan, showing new actions and other new features and to get feedback from councillors about this.
- 1.4 The action plan follows a similar style to previously. However, it does contain more background information on the Council's emissions and those in the borough and also how environmental action can produce co-benefits and how this links in with actions in the Climate Emergency Action Plan.
- 1.5 Additionally, progress within each theme of the action plan in 2021-22 is outlined to show the key achievements already made and then the actions for the current year follow to show how things are moving forward. At the end of each theme a case study section is provided, to attempt to bring the actions into reality and so they are not just 'words on a page'.
- 1.6 The Council is very keen that the Action Plan can be used to inform residents about the Council's work on the climate emergency. However, we also want it to inspire and empower residents and communities to think about how they could change their behaviours to live more environmentally friendly, or how they could set up or participate in any environmental projects in their communities, linking in with the Council's Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) approach. A 'what can you do' section of the Action Plan has been introduced to help with this, highlighting actions people can take to reduce their environmental impact, with links to local organisations who can support them to do that.

## 2. Recommended Decision

- 2.1 The Panel is asked to review the new iteration of the Climate Emergency Action Plan and members are encouraged to present feedback about actions in the action plan, and how it can be communicated to residents as a source of education and inspiration.

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

- 3.1 To help move forward the Council's work on the climate emergency, particularly linking to how we can work to communicate our work better to residents.

### **4. Alternative Options**

- 4.1 Not Applicable

## 5. Background information

- 5.1 The Council's [first Climate Emergency Action Plan](#) was published in January 2020, after the declaration of a climate emergency. Although useful in setting some key themes of the plan and some initial broad actions, it was decided that a more comprehensive and detailed plan was required to provide more information about the Council's actions tackling the climate emergency.
- 5.2 Therefore, in June 2021, the Council produced a new version of the [Climate Emergency Action Plan](#) complete with 8 themes and over 50 actions, all with clear descriptions of what they were, along with timescales and measures of success. The action plan has been monitored throughout the past year, and it is now due for review just over one year on from its initial production.
- 5.3 The most recent iteration of the Climate Emergency Action Plan aims to build on the previous version by making several changes to it including:
- Communicating about the 'co-benefits' of climate actions such as improved health and wellbeing, cost savings and increased jobs.
  - Providing more information on greenhouse gas emissions, both of the Council and in the borough
  - Reporting key progress made on each Climate Emergency Action Plan theme in 2021-2022 is outlined at the start of each theme.
  - Identifying case studies to give more detailed information about actions completed to bring these 'to life' for residents to engage with and see that actions are being achieved.

### New actions

- 5.4 Many of the actions within the 2021-2022 action plan have remained, albeit with slight changes to how they are being delivered as developments and opportunities have arisen to increase the impact that these actions can have.
- 5.5 However, several new main actions have been added to the action plan. Some of these were already being worked on during 2021-2022, but had not been captured on for reporting in the plan. The new actions are:
- Develop understanding of local offsetting opportunities to inform out pathway to net zero
  - Creation of Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy
  - Creation of a nature reserve at Cymbeline Meadows and adopting management of Iron Latch Woods site.
  - Improvements to walking and cycling infrastructure as part of the Town Deal
  - Promotion of free cycle training offered by Essex County Council
  - Subject to approval, using Levelling Up Fund to introduce options to support active and sustainable travel modes in the St Botolph's area.
  - Create a new Waste and Recycling Strategy to set out the Council's direction and approach in line with Environment Act 2021.
  - Provide support to help residents transition to more sustainable lifestyles, showing how environmental actions can bring about other benefits such as cost savings and health benefits. This includes actions such as the 'community cycle' project and the Council's funding to support increasing domestic energy efficiency.

- Promote support and funding available to businesses to help them become greener
- Provide opportunities for residents to increase the energy efficiency of, and decarbonise, their homes
- Work with partners to identify how to close green skills gaps across Essex
- Unlock opportunities for local organisations to upskill staff in energy efficiency and domestic retrofit
- Reduce printing and postage at Council to contribute to reducing waste and saving emissions

## **Climate adaptation**

- 5.6 There has also been a new theme added to the action plan; adapting to a changing climate. It was considered that this should get established as its own theme, rather than weaving into other themes. The Council is at the start of its understanding in thinking about actions that can consider the impacts of climate change on projects and how we can design actions to take account of these risks (e.g. extreme temperatures, drought) and the resultant impacts (e.g. impacts on biodiversity, health).
- 5.7 One of the main actions in this theme currently is involving the University of Essex in how we can understand the potential of increasing the coverage of oyster beds to act as natural barriers to coastal erosion, alongside providing valuable habitats for wildlife. The project also seeks to understand how a circular economy can be created around oysters, so waste oyster shell can be collected from restaurants to help restore colonies of oysters on the seabed. The project will be collaborative, working with oyster fishermen in Mersea and restaurant owners on this. It will also have a community element to educate people about the value of oyster beds in protecting the coastline, as well more generally about the impacts of climate change and why we need to adapt to these.

## **Communicating and creating engagement around the action plan**

- 5.8 The Council is keen for the action plan to be both informative and inspiring, so residents can think about how they can take steps to lead more environmentally friendly lifestyles. Simple steps are being taken for this, including:
- The production of an infographic to show key actions the Council has achieved between July 2021 – July 2022 to contribute to tackling climate change and reducing our environmental impact
  - A section on ‘what residents can do’, providing links to resources where they can access information on ways to measure their carbon footprint and ideas of actions they could fit into their lifestyles to become more environmentally friendly. Opportunities for residents to participate in some of the Council’s environmental projects are mentioned in the document, as well as pointing people towards community groups that undertake environmental action such as Eco Colchester.
  - Having a shorter summary document of actions within the Action Plan produced. This makes the Action Plan more digestible for those who want a quick overview of what we are doing. It is planned for this to be sit on the website, with the full action available as a downloadable pdf. Similarly, the ‘What you can do’ section in the Action Plan will be separated into its own document for easy reading.

## **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 from this report. Active travel and cleaner air activities contribute towards quality of life and general health.

## **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.