

# Environment and Sustainability Panel

Thursday, 28 January 2021

**Attendees:** Councillor Peter Chillingworth, Councillor Mark Cory, Councillor Robert Davidson, Councillor Mark Goacher, Councillor Sam McCarthy, Councillor Lee Scordis, Councillor Lorcan Whitehead  
**Apologies:** Councillor Nigel Chapman  
**Substitutes:** Councillor Pauline Hazell (for Councillor Nigel Chapman)

## 18 Urgent Items

Councillor Cory introduced the item, explaining to the Panel that they were being asked to consider supporting a motion that had been proposed in relation to the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill. The motion had been proposed by the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill Alliance, and a representative of the Group, Juliet Heller, was in attendance at the meeting to address the Panel. Councillor Cory confirmed that the proposal had been circulated to members of the Panel ahead of the meeting, and explained his desire for the Panel to consider the item with a view to determining if cross-party support could be obtained prior to requesting Cabinet to consider the motion.

Juliet Heller addressed the Panel, explaining that members of the Climate and Ecological Emergency (CEE) Bill Alliance, were calling for more substantive action to be taken both globally and in the United Kingdom to stop the planet heating more than 1.5 degrees centigrade, and to halt the destruction of ecosystems and wildlife. The Panel heard that scientists had predicted temperature rises of up to four degrees centigrade above pre-industrial levels, which could bring catastrophic consequences for the planet. The Panel heard that the world was facing an ecological emergency including massive erosion of species diversity and ecosystem services such as pollination, food and water resources, with up to one million species were faced with extinction, according to the United Nations. Within the United Kingdom, it was stated that over 40% of species had declined since the 1970s, and that over the last century, over 97% of wildlife meadows had been removed. Juliet explained that the CEE Bill had been drafted by a group of scientists, lawyers, academics and campaigners with the aim of helping to prevent future damaging changes, and to take steps to replenish biodiversity, and was due to have its second reading before Parliament on 26 March 2021. Juliet stated that the government was not on course to meet its stated target of zero net emissions by the year 2050, and the new Bill would oblige the government to develop an emergency strategy with legal obligations, including reducing the United Kingdom's carbon footprint including manufacture and trading of goods from overseas was accounted for, providing for the regeneration of depleted soils, habitats and species, and the setting up of an independent Citizens Assembly which would be guided by experts to help set up coherent strategies and policies.

Juliet explained to the Panel that the CEE Bill Alliance was asking Colchester Borough Council to pass a motion declaring its support for the CEE Bill, together with writing to local Members of Parliament to request that they too support the Bill. She summarised the position by saying that the world was facing its greatest threat in thousands of years in climate change, and that the pandemic had demonstrated that when

governments were required to act quickly and decisively, they were able to do so, and the CEE Bill was an important step to ensure that the government recognised the seriousness of the challenges ahead, and would step up action on the climate and ecological crisis.

At the invitation of Councillor Cory, Maggie Ibrahim, Sustainability and Climate Change Manager, addressed the Panel and explained that it was not her position to suggest to the Panel whether or not they should support the proposal but that she would briefly provide an overview of the current position. The Panel heard that the proposed CEE Bill set out changes to the existing Climate Act of 2008, and provided some different avenues for helping to achieve ambitions for carbon reduction, with the key changes proposed to require strategies to be drawn up to be accountable by the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State, together with the formation of a Citizens Assembly and more detail around what could and could not be considered when reporting on carbon offsetting. She explained that the CEE Bill provided a way for government to legislate to achieve the carbon reduction goal by way of offering improvements on the Climate Act 2008, but that the final consequences of any such Bill would be subject to further debate in Parliament.

Councillor Cory likened the proposal to Colchester Borough Council's declaration of a climate emergency, and said that it was now time to have clear actions in terms of both a strategy and a plan to deliver this on a national level. He believed that it would be useful to support the CEE Bill, and cited the need for a collective approach to the environmental challenges ahead.

Councillor Chillingworth made the point that the Environmental Minister had spoken against the CEE Bill, which he felt was unfortunate, as with cross-party support, the CEE Bill would have presented no issues, but as things stood the government did not support the CEE Bill and felt that it was actually getting in the way of actions they wished to take. He pointed out that the Environmental Bill had been delayed, and wondered whether this would also impact on the proposed CEE Bill?

Officers supporting the Panel were not able to confirm what impact the route through Parliament would have on the two proposed Bills, and Mandy Jones, Assistant Director Place and Client Services, explained to the Panel that the urgent nature of the request had not afforded Officers the necessary time to consider the proposal in the required level of detail.

Councillor Cory explained that it was his understanding that the CEE Bill offered amendments to the Environment Bill, and therefore did not feel that the delay of the Environment Bill would impact on the CEE Bill.

Councillor Davidson explained that he was quite sympathetic to the views expressed by Juliet Heller at the meeting, and suggested that all Panel members shared a desire to improve the environment and act against climate change. He confirmed that the government's Environment Bill had been recently withdrawn, and explained that the reason for this was twofold. The proposed Bill had been bringing in various environmental targets and would now be brought back to Parliament in May 2021 and was expected to obtain Royal Assent by the autumn. He explained that the reason for this withdrawal was that Members of Parliament from various political parties were all backing various amendments to the Bill, and that the government was committed to reaching the targets it had set by the year 2030, and wished to be able to provide a robust proposal at the United Nations Climate Conference 2021. Councillor Davidson was open to the Panel debating the issue, but felt that until the improved version of the Environmental Bill had been received the Panel was not able to make a constructive comment on the issue. Councillor Cory acknowledged the points that

Councillor Davidson had made, but added that in his opinion there was still value in supporting the CEE Bill to demonstrate support for going as far as possible with the Environment Bill.

Councillor Whitehead confirmed his support for the proposed motion and the CEE Bill, commenting that Local Authorities needed the support of Central Government to take the scale of action needed to address environmental issues. He felt that the fact that the CEE Bill did not have cross-party support made it all the more necessary for Colchester Borough Council to demonstrate its support for the CEE Bill.

Councillor Goacher addressed the Panel, and confirmed his support for the proposed motion and CEE Bill. He stated that it was important to push the government to go as far as possible, and was pleased to note that the CEE was not only concerned with the climate emergency, but also the ecological emergency, including sections on air pollution which Councillor Goacher was particularly keen to support. He felt that Local Authorities should be concerned with prompting central government to take action themselves, and for this reason he would offer support to the Bill, although he felt that some of the measures proposed were not actually strong enough and his overall impression was that the CEE Bill was a very moderate one.

Councillor Hazell said that the issue being discussed was a very serious global issue, and it was up to each individual to do what they could to reduce resource consumption, and to recycle and repair. She stated that encouraging local commitment to the aims of the Panel was a very positive thing, but she felt that she could not support the proposed CEE Bill and, in her opinion, it was not needed. She explained that she felt that it was premature and would add layers of bureaucracy to the processes which would hinder and not help dealing with the issues. She did not agree with Councillor Whitehead's comments, and felt that local councils were able to make a difference without central government support and that locally the council could do a great deal. She felt that it was right to push the government where appropriate, but noted that over the next five years, there was a commitment to spending at least three billion pounds on addressing ecological issues, and she felt it was appropriate to wait to see what the government was actually proposing via the Environment Bill before acting. Although Councillor Hazell confirmed that she could not support the proposed CEE Bill, she would fully support working under the Terms of Reference of the Panel to make whatever local improvements were possible. In response to this point, Councillor Cory pointed out that the Terms of Reference of this Panel also made reference to stewardship and leadership on a wider level than just local issues, and repeated his belief that government needed the support of Local Authorities in tackling urgent issues.

Juliet Heller offered the Panel some further clarification on the delay to the Environment Bill of approximately six months which had just been announced due to issues with the Covid-19 pandemic which she felt was disappointing. She repeated her belief that the requirements of the CEE Bill would be more useful by enshrining government targets in law as opposed to simply aspirational pledges for the future.

Councillor Chillingworth confirmed his agreement with everything that Juliet had said to the Panel, save for the means of implementation. He believed that the government was already taking extreme steps to ameliorate climate change, and that now that there was new leadership in the United States, over the coming year the United Kingdom and the United States would lead the world towards a better environment. He further felt that the delay to the Environment Bill may allow some of the extra elements proposed by the CEE Bill to be incorporated into the final legislation.

Councillor Chillingworth pointed out that in the year 2020 17% of the United

Kingdom's power had been provided by nuclear power and 42% by renewal energy sources, with only 41% from fossil fuels, and he felt that this was illustrative of great progress being made. He believes that the government is doing what it can, and confirmed that he could not, therefore, support the proposed CEE Bill.

Summarising his position on the proposed CEE Bill, Councillor Cory confirmed his belief that it could only add to the government's agenda in combating the exponential decline of the natural world, and felt that the CEE Bill would help and not hinder this aim. Councillor Davidson made his final point that the government's Environment Bill was going to set legal targets to hold the government to account, and he felt that although the CEE Bill was well intentioned, he was not sure what it would achieve in the bigger picture. Councillor Cory took this on board but still felt that could do no harm, and would only serve to drive up standard if improvement and accountability.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET that the following motion on the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill be approved and adopted:-

Motion to Support the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill Preamble

Humans have already caused irreversible climate change, the impacts of which are being felt in the UK and around the world. Global temperatures have increased by 1 degree Celsius from pre-industrial levels. Atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> levels are above 400 parts per million (ppm) and continue to rise. This far exceeds the 350ppm deemed to be a safe level for humanity.

Without more significant and sustained action, the world is set to exceed the Paris Agreement's 1.5°C limit between 2030 and 2040. Therefore the current UK target of net zero by 2050 is not satisfactory. It is too little too late. The increase in harm caused by a rise of 2°C rather than 1.5°C is significant. This is described by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C published in October 2018. According to the IPCC, limiting heating to 1.5°C may still be possible with ambitious action from national and sub-national authorities, civil society, the private sector and local communities. The costs of failing to address this crisis will far outstrip the investments required to prevent it. Investing now will bring many benefits in the form of good jobs, breathable cities and thriving communities.

Council notes that

- i. This council has declared a climate and ecological emergency;
- ii. Many local authorities have established Citizens' Assemblies that are playing an important role in assisting them in their plans to achieve net zero by 2030 or before; and that
- iii. There is a Bill before Parliament—the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill (published as the "Climate and Ecology Bill")—according to which the Government must develop an emergency strategy that:
  - a. requires that the UK plays its fair and proper role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions consistent with limiting global temperature increase to 1.5 degrees C above pre-industrial temperatures;
  - b. ensures that all the UK's consumption emissions are accounted for;
  - c. includes emissions from aviation and shipping;
  - d. protects and restores biodiverse habitats along overseas supply chains;
  - e. restores and regenerates the UK's depleted soils, wildlife habitats and species populations to healthy and robust states, maximising their capacity to absorb CO<sub>2</sub> and their resistance to climate heating;
  - f. sets up an independent Citizens' Assembly, representative of the UK's

population, to engage with Parliament and Government and help develop the emergency strategy.

Council therefore resolves to:

- i. Support the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill
- ii. Inform the local media of this decision;
- iii. Write to local MPs, asking them to support the Bill; and
- iv. Write to the CEE Bill Alliance, the organisers of the campaign for the Bill, expressing its support (campaign@ceebill.uk).

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## **Sustainability in Planning**

Karen Syrett, Planning and Housing Manager, attended to present the report and assist the Panel with their enquiries. The Panel heard that it was possible to assume that Councils had a potential opportunity to support the green targets set by government through Local Plans and planning decisions in terms of the infrastructure, location and design of new developments, but that over the years decisions taken at a national level had created some uncertainty within the system. The Panel heard that the forthcoming Environment Bill had been delayed until August, and that what the Bill was seeking to do was introduce a biodiversity net gain requirement for all new development, as well as the need for Councils to produce spatial strategies to protect and enhance the natural world, with such strategies being informed by two new strategies to be produced by Natural England; protected species strategies and protected site strategies. The legislation would also seek to enshrine key environmental targets in law as well as establishing a new environmental regulator. Karen advised the Panel that in 2019, the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government published a consultation on future home standards, which would provide updated targets for energy efficiency in new homes and would be regulated via building regulations. As part of this consultation, views were sought on whether or not to restrict Planning Authorities from setting higher energy efficiency targets in Local Plans. The Panel heard that as part of a deregulation exercise carried out in 2015, Government stated that there was an intention to stop Councils setting higher targets in Planning Policies, and although this restriction was never enacted in legislation, it did set out intended policy, and as a result most Councils avoided anything which might cause a problem at Local Plan examination. A response to the 2019 survey which had been recently published recognised that there had been uncertainty for local Planning Authorities and builders, and there was a need to provide Local Authorities with a renewed understanding of the role they were expected to take to assist in creating greener environments. In the short term, central Government has confirmed that it is not intended to amend the Energy Act 2008, and this means that local Planning Authorities will be allowed to set higher standards. The document goes on to state that as there is a move towards ever higher levels of energy efficiency standards for new homes, with updated building regulations, it is less likely that Local Planning Authorities will need to set local energy requirements in order to achieve the net zero goal. The expected response to the Planning White Paper will provide more certainty on this point.

The Panel heard that policies had been included in both the adopted and the emerging Local Plan on climate change, and these policies encourage and support the provision of low carbon and renewable energies and encourage design and construction techniques which contribute to climate change mitigation. Within the Garden Communities policies, however, this encouragement and support changed to a requirement. The Panel were advised that the upcoming review of the Local Plan

was the perfect opportunity to implement new policies and to seek policies that require higher standards than those expected to be implemented through Building Regulations.

Karen explained that it was necessary to get the Local Plan adopted, and it may be then be possible to provide some additional supplementary planning policies in the short term to promote new technologies available to developers and builders, although these could only provide guidance. The Panel were advised that it was intended to introduce a checklist which would encourage people to address environmental issues when submitting planning applications, and would enable the Planning Committee to be advised on what elements of the checklist were being incorporated into any scheme. It was intended to consult on the checklist, together with other proposed changes to the local Validation List, and the checklist would be adopted following this consultation.

Councillor Cory voiced his frustration when seeing new developments which were not constructed in an ecologically friendly way, and spoke of the importance of using the Local Plan to ensure that as much was done to address this locally as possible.

Councillor Chillingworth felt that it was very important that attempts were made to persuade developers to adopt more environmentally friendly practices before they were required to do so by Building Regulations, and wondered whether the checklist could be incorporated into the Supplementary Planning Guidance. He commented that new houses being built today would have to be retrofitted to bring them into line with future standards, and thought that developers should be encouraged to make housing compliant now, even if there was an initially great cost to buy the housing. Councillor Chillingworth expressed his support for the proposed checklist.

Councillor Scordis commented that he had seen issues with new developments in his ward, and noted that sadly it was often the affordable housing that was left behind in terms of some of the energy efficient options that were available. He asked whether the proposed checklist covered properties that passed through permitted development without the need for planning permission.

Councillor Goacher expressed his full support for the proposed checklist, and noted that he had been made aware of developments in Colchester where there was no pavement which in his view was designed to encourage car use. He felt that anything that could be done to encourage developers to think about these issues before submitting an application could only be a good thing. Although Councillor Goacher did support the checklist, he expressed his reservation that it was still part of a growth agenda and gave an implied permission to continue development if the checklist was adhered to. He felt that it was extremely important to make all new developments as green as possible and although there were areas where he may encourage a stronger stance to be taken the checklist was a good start. He made reference to the 10% biodiversity net gain requirement listed in the checklist, but felt that this was not a helpful requirement. Supporting this stance, he cited the example of fields of wheat which would have low biodiversity, and if houses were built on the land a biodiversity net gain could be achieved by simply planting some trees of different varieties.

Councillor Cory supported this view, and felt that it would be useful if the biodiversity elements of the checklist were re-examined with a view to potentially improving them. Councillor Hazell confirmed her view that anything that the Council could do to improve building standards was very welcome. She noted that Council developments were already being constructed to higher standards, and welcomed encouraging private developers to do likewise.

Councillor Whitehead accepted that the checklist could not be enforced, but

questioned whether the Council could encourage good development by highlighting good practice to encourage future development through its communication channels.

Councillor Davidson expressed his opinion that the proposed checklist may not go far enough, and sought reassurance that the principles of wide streets, trees and grass verges could be incorporated into the checklist. He also requested that the checklist should also be used when modifying existing buildings to improve the standards of these, and to encourage the implementation of higher building standards across the Borough.

Karen Syrett agreed that updating the Supplementary Planning Guidance was a good idea, but one which would take some time to implement due to the commitments of Officers on other projects. She confirmed that with regard to permitted development, unfortunately the Council had very little control over this, even where prior approval was needed. She confirmed that the checklist would be required for as many forms of application as possible. The Panel heard that biodiversity net gain would be a requirement of the Environment Bill in due course, but that it would be possible to include more information on this subject in the Supplementary Planning Guidance. Karen agreed that communication promoting good developments was a good idea and was potentially something that could be linked into future developments such as the environmentally friendly Elfreda House development. In terms of adopting the principles of wider roads and spaces, Karen commented that these were not suitable in every location and that in some cases higher density developments were necessary. This was something that could be looked expanding upon in future Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs).

Councillor Cory supported setting as high a standard as possible through SPDs, and queried whether it was possible to request standards for conversion works carried out as part of permitted development, but Karen explained that legislation determined what could be taken into account with these developments and there was no scope for local standards to be introduced.

Andrew Tyrrell, Client and Business Manager, addressed the Panel and advised them that the Council's current housing developments were being built to the principle of Future Homes 2025 which included the use of air source heat pumps as opposed to gas boilers, and commented that the Council was attempting to lead by example in its developments. He also confirmed that some funding had been obtained to support retrofitting existing housing stock in ways that would benefit tenants by bringing down their bills as well as the environmental gains this entailed.

Councillor Davidson queried whether provision could be made in the budget for bringing in more staff to assist with the production of new SPDs, commenting that over a thousand houses were being built a year and it would therefore be better if these could be built to a higher standard as soon as possible.

*RESOLVED* that the contents of the report be noted.

### **Colchester eCargo Bike Library project update**

Councillor Tim Young attended the meeting as a visiting Councillor to address the Panel. He stated that the eCargo bike initiative was a very positive one, which was to be supported, but did voice a concern around the marketing and publicity of the scheme, commenting that until a couple of weeks ago he knew very little of the scheme. Councillor Young praised the work of the Panel to date, but said that as a representative of Greenstead ward he was keen that the environmental message was shown as being relevant to everybody, even those in more deprived areas. The Panel

heard that Councillor Young had been working with a local food bank making deliveries by car, but that use of eCargo bikes would be much more environmentally sound and could be used to take food both to the food bank, and then delivering it out again. Councillor Young called for the scheme to be rolled out to charities community groups and not just businesses.

Councillor Cory agreed with the sentiments expressed by Councillor Young, and commented that he had undertaken the level three bikeability training that was required to use the eCargo bikes and was happy to support others to do so. He explained that part of the strategic vision of the Council was not only to improve the natural environment but to make our economy fairer for all and to stimulate and support more deprived areas.

Councillor Julie Young, Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Culture and Performance, addressed the Panel as a visiting Councillor. She expressed her enthusiasm for supporting the project and in particular linking it to the food bank in Greenstead which was the second most used food bank in Colchester. She explained to the panel that she had obtained funding from Essex County Council to support Lee Pugh in his work with the eCargo bike project and suggested that other Councillors might like to consider this if they had money left in their budgets. Councillor Young had not been aware of the training offered to Councillors in respect of the eCargo bikes, and suggested that if this were to be offered to Councillors again then there would be significantly more interest.

Emily Harrup, Project Officer (Transport and Sustainability) attended to present the report and assist the Panel with their enquiries. The Panel received a presentation outlining the use that had been made of the eCargo bikes and Emily confirmed that following the initial setting up of the project, pool bikes were now ready to be distributed, which would lead to more publicity for the project. A number of the eCargo bikes had been handed over to the champions of the scheme, and also to High Woods and Castle Park Rangers. The scheme was supported by developed branding on the bikes and further development of relevant web pages to incorporate a short term hire agreement. The Panel heard that champions of the scheme had used the eCargo bikes, cutting the use of petrol vehicles and providing fitness and wellbeing boosts for staff. Emily gave examples of some of the business using the bikes, including hospital staff and Repair, Reuse, Recycle CIC, Colchester Borough Homes, Millwheels, Norwegian Bakers, Wivenhoe Town Council, Colchester Bike Kitchen. Emily explained that the next steps for the scheme were to make pool bikes available for use and interest had been shown in these from organisations such as Colchester Borough Homes maintenance team, University of Essex, and the Food Bank, but unfortunately it was not possible to provide the necessary bikeability training to new riders at present due to the lockdown. The Panel heard that Lee Pugh intended to use an eCargo bike to provide Colchester's first eCargo bike delivery service and he intended to offer local businesses low cost eco-delivery options as well as working with vulnerable residents and local charities to collect and deliver essential items. Emily outlined the next steps for the scheme, including using the bikes within the Council's own teams and working with other partners such as En-Form and the Colchester Business Improvement District. It was intended to refine the data which was currently being collected to calculate the reduction in carbon emissions that the scheme had provided.

Councillor McCarthy expressed his support for the scheme, and enquired what work had been done with partners so far, and where the information gathered on emissions would be shared. Emily confirmed that discussions with partners had been undertaken



but disrupted by lockdown and would be recommenced shortly. She confirmed that she provides a monthly report to the Energy Savings Trust which included feedback from the champions on the number of journeys and miles travelled, to allow accurate calculations to be made on carbon and emission savings which could be presented to the Panel in the future.

Councillor Chillingworth considered that even though the scheme was at an early stage, much could be made of the excellent progress that had been made by advertising through the Council's communication channels.

Councillor Davidson noted that some of the companies that had expressed an interest in using the bikes were commercial companies that may be able to afford to source their own bikes with support from Officers. He hoped that there would be scope to expand the scheme to Tiptree and West Mersea where he felt that the Parish Councils would find the bikes extremely useful. Councillor Davidson's final point was that traditional recycled push bikes could also be used as with a trailer attached some of these would also have a carrying capacity and would have less environmental impact than even an eCargo bike would.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Whitehead, Lee Pugh addressed the Panel and explained that it was extremely easy to navigate throughout Colchester on the bikes with routes of up to thirty miles. He expressed his enthusiasm for the scheme and praised the work of Officers and Councillors for both their financial and practical support.

In relation to points raised in relation to publicising the scheme, Emily Harrup explained that one of the roles of the champions was to promote the scheme, and they had been loaned a bike on the basis that they would assist with promotion. Although the current situation had hampered traditional promotion the team were ready to step up their promotional activities using stories of the use of eCargo bikes to support this. Emily explained that the purpose of the pool bikes was to be available for short term loans of up to three months, with the intention being that if commercial companies found them useful they would then source their own in future from a variety of eCargo bikes ranging in cost from approximately £2,000 to £9,000. The Panel learned that contact had already been made with West Mersea Parish Council and Officers were keen for the bike to be used by as wide a variety of people as possible, potentially expanding the scheme to include local residents if funding could be obtained. Emily confirmed that there were seven pool bikes available and advised the Panel that she would happily advise anyone who was interested in taking one on trial on a flexible loan basis.

*RESOLVED* that the contents of the report be noted.

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## **Review of Environmental Sustainability Strategy**

Maggie Ibrahim, Sustainability and Climate Change Manager attended to present the report and assist the Panel with their enquiries. The Panel heard that there was the need for a new framework that drew work around sustainability, carbon reduction and climate change, particularly as the Environment Sustainability Strategy of the Council had ended in 2020. Maggie appraised the Panel on the work that had been undertaken to prepare the framework, including the review of key documentation, and explained that this review had highlighted themes, and the need to include an element in the framework on monitoring and accountability. The Panel were requested to agree that the Sustainability and Climate Emergency Response Framework be developed for the next Panel, together with an updating of the Climate Emergency Action Plan.

Councillor Cory spoke in support of the proposed themes of the Sustainability and Climate Emergency Response Framework, and the rationalisation of drawing the different strategies together into one clear strategy with one clear action plan. Councillor Chillingworth added his support to the approach being proposed, and felt it important that the current different strategies were codified into one document, and supported by an action plan which would deal with quantifiable actions whose progress could be monitored, a sentiment that was echoed by Councillor Hazell.

*RESOLVED* that the Sustainability and Climate Emergency Response Framework outlined in the report be agreed, to include the development of a 'Climate Emergency Strategic Response (CESR) 2021- 2023' document, and a revised Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) that sits beneath the strategic themes of the CESR 2021-23.

## **22 Climate Emergency Action Plan Update**

Ben Plummer, Climate Emergency Project Officer, attended the meeting to present the report and assist the Panel with its enquiries. The Panel heard that a review was currently underway of a proposal received from the Carbon Trust in respect of the Council's proposed Carbon Management Plan, which would include key principles such as setting emissions reduction, and a review of options available for offsetting the Council's carbon emissions.

The Panel heard that one of the elements of the Council's Air Quality Project was a variety of signage designed to reduce idling of car engines in the town centre which had received planning permission and would be erected soon. The possibility of introducing traffic light timers to advise motorists how long they would be waiting had been explored, but unfortunately the traffic lights used in Colchester were not suitable for this installation.

Emily Harrup, Project Officer (Transport and Sustainability) showed the Panel a newly designed poster promoting the scheme, which had been modified to make the message clearer to motorists. The new posters would be made available for use in the near future, and it was intended that the project would be supported by ongoing volunteer action as it progressed.

Ben advised the Panel that the Council was due to go to tender in the near future for the installation of electric vehicle (EV) charging points, and the Local Government Association (LGA) was currently carrying out a benchmarking exercise to compare the progress of Councils in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and the results of this were awaited.

Maggie Ibrahim, Sustainability and Climate Change Manager attended the meeting and advised that Panel that the Council had set up a Climate Opportunities Working Group to help drive the implementation of the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) and was comprised of members of staff from across the Council.

Councillor Davidson wondered whether the EV charging points at Rowan House could be opened at weekends to allow members of the public to access these, and considered that the posters promoting the no-idling scheme could be made larger and easier to read to capture the attention of drivers. Councillor Goacher considered that it would be helpful for the air quality monitors to be made available to volunteers as well

as schools, although agreed that school use was the most important. Emily Harrup confirmed that suggestions which had been made about the posters and signage would be passed back to the development team.

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*RESOLVED* that the contents of the report be noted.

**Work Programme 2020-2021**

Matthew Evans, Democratic Services Officer, attended the meeting to present the report and assist the Panel with their enquiries.

The Panel noted that the Environmental and Sustainability Strategy would be presented to it at its next meeting, and that Councillor Cory had requested that an item on pesticides which were harmful to bees would be considered by the Panel in the future.

*RESOLVED* that the contents of the work programme be noted, and that additional agreed items be presented to the next meeting of the Panel.