

Environment and Sustainability Panel

29 October 2020

Present: Councillor Nigel Chapman
Councillor Peter Chillingworth
Councillor Mark Cory
Councillor Robert Davidson
Councillor Mark Goacher
Councillor Sam McCarthy
Councillor Lee Scordis
Councillor Lorcan Whitehead

Substitutes:

7. Minutes of previous meeting

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of 17 September be approved as a correct record.

8. Air Quality Project Update

Councillor Cory introduced this item and explained that due to the attendance of external parties in relation to this report, he proposed to take this item first, out of sequence with the published agenda, unless any objections to this proposal were received, in order to allow the external parties to leave the meeting once their presentation had concluded.

Belinda Silkstone, Environmental Protection Manager attended to present the report and assist the Panel with their enquiries. The Panel heard that through March and April when the country was in lockdown, a 40% improvement in air quality had been measured when compared to the same time period in 2019, and this had been noted and reported by local residents. Although the improvement in air quality had not remained at this level, a general improvement in quality of 20% was noted compared to 2019, and it was felt that it was appropriate to build on this change, principally through the Council's 'No Idling' project and associated signage.

Amy Meadows of Meadows Communications addressed the Panel in her role as a behaviour change specialist who had been working with the Council since summer 2020 on the 'No Idling' campaign. The Panel heard that it was crucial that the feelings of residents were understood, and that over 11,000 residents had been surveyed in respect of air pollution and vehicle idling. The survey demonstrated widespread support for turning off vehicle engines, but highlighted the need for more specific information about the impact on individuals, and it was for this reason that the intended campaign looked to make people aware of the link between vehicle idling and poor air quality, and the consequences of this for them and their families. Community

engagement was a key thread to the project, and community volunteers had been engaged to approach motorists in areas with high incidents of vehicle idling, and key local partners and businesses had been engaged with the project. The Panel heard that as well as traditional print media coverage, social media was being used to promote the project, together with ambient advertising around Colchester. Emma Wallace of Meadows Communications advised the Panel that the launch of the project had taken place on 8 October 2020, coinciding with Clean Air Day, and had provided an excellent opportunity to engage with the public and distribute campaign materials. The event had been supported by a number of Borough Councillors, and received good coverage in the media including strong social media coverage from the National Health Service (NHS) East Suffolk and North Essex, the University of Essex, Community 360, Actual Radio, Colchester United, Anglia News and Clean Air Colchester, among others. Billboards and banners had been located in Colchester, including next to schools, where parents dropping children off were a key target, and petrol pump stickers were also in place. A postcard containing myths and facts around engine idling had been produced to address common concerns of motorists and provide reassurance to them.

Amy Meadows addressed the Panel to give further details of the campaign, which was to run until April 2021. The areas around schools were a key priority, particularly in areas with poor air quality, and toolkits were being prepared to distribute to schools with suggestions on how to run events supporting the campaign within school activities and to engage the children in the project. Work was also ongoing with the Colchester Business Improvement District (BID) to target businesses in the town centre via mailings in community owned channels and offering training opportunities for business and their staff and encouraging businesses to develop their own anti-idling policies. It was intended to work together with the Mercury Theatre and Colchester Mosque, together with other partners such as the Hospital and Clinical Commissioning group. Further promotional activities were planned for the start of 2021 with the intention to get media coverage again, including further ambient advertising and case studies with local people to talk about the impact of air quality on their health.

The Panel received an update on the signage project which supported the 'No Idling' project, and heard that planning permission had now been received for the signage, and signs were to be sited at the top and bottom of Brook Street and at Eastgates level crossing. Research assistants were to be engaged to monitor the number of times engines were switched off at these locations and they would be equipped with portable air quality sensors. The messages on the signs were based on social norms, self efficacy and reflectiveness, and research had demonstrated that these were effective for a short time, and the aim of the project was to test their effectiveness over a longer period of time up to eighteen months. Now that planning permission had been obtained, the project would be up and running by mid-November 2020.

Councillor Cory expressed his pleasure in the progress of the project so far, and commented that he was particularly keen to see more engagement with local schools, and enquired how the project could support the current 3PR project being run with schools by the North East Parking Partnership (NEPP). He also enquired

how many volunteers had been engaged as part of the project to date. Rosie Welch, Air Quality and Community Engagement Officer, confirmed that so far twenty three volunteers had signed up, together with thirty two people on a stakeholder list.

Councillor Goacher informed the Panel that he had spent some time as a warden for the project, holding placards in Brook Street and Ipswich Road and had some feedback for the group as a result of this. He commented that the orange signs associated with the project were effective if the drivers already knew what the signs meant, but the message to turn off engines was not clear enough if drivers had not seen the media campaign. He further commented that a Colchester Borough Council van had been approached on Brook Street, and the driver had refused to run off his engine or engage with the volunteers, and he wondered what education had been undertaken with regard to Council staff. Councillor Goacher observed that a common reason given by drivers for not turning off their engines was that they didn't know how long they would be waiting, and although this was primarily an issue with Essex County Council Highways, he wondered why traffic lights in the UK did not provide information on how long there was left until the lights changed.

Belinda Silkstone confirmed that there had been a feasibility study into driver facing timers on traffic lights, but unfortunately it was not possible to implement these in Colchester. With regard to the signage, Amy Meadows confirmed that the design had initially been intended to go on notice boards in schools and workplaces where it could be read in detail and following requests the posters had been given out to people to use. In fact, an additional poster was in being designed to go by the roadside with a much stronger, clearer message for motorists, together with additional banners to go outside schools.

Councillor Davidson lent his support to Councillor Goacher's points on poster legibility, and also commented that the banners and signs were only produced in English and could therefore not be read by visitors, and he felt that the message needed to be distilled into a simple image which could be understood by all. He went on to express his disappointment that the campaign appeared to be only directed at areas around traffic lights, and requested that it be expanded to incorporate other areas of known serious air pollution.

Belinda Silkstone confirmed that there had been a feasibility study into driver facing timers on traffic lights, but unfortunately it was not possible to implement these in Colchester. She acknowledged the issues with air quality around Mersea Road, but confirmed that for funding reasons the signage project had been focussed on the air quality management area currently in place around Brook Street and East Gate. Amy Meadows confirmed that work was underway to translate the materials into other languages, including working with Colchester Mosque and the Council's own Engagement Officer to determine the most suitable languages to use.

In response to a further question from Councillor Davidson, Belinda Silkstone explained that although Essex County Council (ECC) Highways held the responsibility for the transport infrastructure, Colchester Borough Council was doing all it could to change behaviours at a local level, and held regular meetings with ECC in a bid to find ways to improve air quality.

Councillor Chillingworth congratulated the team on the campaign, but stressed that the programme had to be continued in the long term and he enquired whether the volunteers and staff would be in place for the coming years, whether more work was planned with schools and what the practicality of lorry drivers turning off their engines was. Emily Wallace confirmed that the impact of the signage was being specifically studied and signs were to be rotated as necessary to ensure that their impact was maintained. It was the intention that over time volunteers from the community would add to the capacity of Clean Air Colchester, and would be in a position to carry the project forward over the coming years using established promotional materials and research. Belinda Silkstone confirmed that the four schools in the air quality management area were a key part of the project, and said that an email had been received from the Civic Society saying that since the start of the campaign the idling of busses was much improved. She saw no reason why lorry drivers should not turn off their engines as well.

Councillor Scordis praised the design of the posters on display, but agree with previous comments that the message needed to be simplified so that those who were unaware of the campaign could understand the message as they were driving. He wondered whether there were any schools in the air quality management area who were not engaging with the project. Amy Meadows confirmed that new promotional materials were being prepared with reduced wording which would be distributed more widely, building the impact of the project over the coming months, together with the 'myths and facts' leaflet which would be accompanied by some 'infographics' which were very simple pictorial designs which would greatly help with the recognition of the project. There had been generally excellent engagement with schools in the air quality management area and beyond, and they were seen to be a key part of the project. Rosie Welch confirmed that the public engagement work that had been carried out at the start of the year revealed that the overriding concern in relation to idling was its impact on public health, and this was the reason that health messages were at the heart of the campaign.

Councillor Nigel Chapman wondered whether any direct contact had been had with the bus companies, or whether the drivers were turning off engines on their own accord, and he also wondered whether any contact had been made with rural schools as he was aware of some idling issues in the villages. It was confirmed that although the pro-active focus was on urban schools at the present time, the toolkit that had been prepared was available for any school to use and the messages contained within it were targeted at the whole of Colchester and were not just relevant to the urban areas. The Panel heard that prior to the launch of the campaign, there had been a number of meetings with the bus companies, some of whom already had a no-idling policy and some of whom were interested in supporting the project. Under the current restrictions being imposed by covid, discussions were ongoing with ECC as to how to bring the bus companies further on board with the project.

Councillor Whitehead confirmed that he had received some promotional material via a school and had found the 'myths and facts' leaflet particularly useful, and he also raised the issue of traffic light waiting indicators. It was explained that the difficulty in

installing simple waiting timers was linked to the fact that traffic light wait times varied dependent on traffic flow, and although other options had been explored in detail with ECC, including an electronic sign linked to traffic lights, the cost and planning restrictions associated with even a short term test of a system were prohibitive.

RESOLVED that the content of the report be noted.

9. Climate Emergency and Community Engagement

Ben Plummer, Climate Emergency Project Officer attended to present the report and assist the Panel with their enquiries. Following the Council's declaration of a climate emergency in 2019, although there had been community engagement on specific projects, it was now intended to carry out an engagement project with the public around broader climate emergency issues. The Panel were being asked to consider a number of approaches that could be taken to engage with the public, and a suggested package of community engagement was presented. The Panel heard that the most effective way of engaging with communities had been determined to be by way of Asset Based Community Development (ABCD), which placed local communities at the heart of addressing issues and implementing long term sustainable solutions.

Linked in to the ABCD approach, Ben presented four methods of community engagement starting with resident consultation, which was important to understand the needs of the community that required to be addressed. Consultation could be carried out by way of surveys either online or in person and the Panel heard that Leeds City Council had sent out several thousand surveys to residents generating a good response. Another option could be to set up an online platform seeking the opinions and ideas of residents, and the Panel were shown an example of a webpage from another Council where residents had been able to propose ideas which other residents were then able to 'upvote', giving an indication of popularity. It was also possible to link residents ideas to a specific geographical area, enabling problems to be identified and dealt with. An additional method of seeking resident input was demonstrated by a scheme run by the London Borough of Redbridge who had given citizens the option to select different activities of the Council, and allocate points to these, and outcome of the allocation was then explained in some detail. Although the majority of the methods of consultation were focussed online, support would be provided to anyone who did not have access to these to ensure that they could still take part either in person or via post.

The second area of community engagement examined was the holding of citizens assemblies, taking the form of a series of workshops where residents are invited to discuss a specific issue. A number of other Local Authorities had adopted this approach, and although these groups were normally carried out in person, it was possible to hold the workshops online.

Ben presented the third method of engagement which was an organisational climate change network which would contain representatives from different groups in Colchester who were working separately to tackle climate change. It was suggested that a sub-group of the One Colchester group could be set up as the One Colchester Climate Change Network, reporting to the One Colchester Strategic Board, of which the Council is a member.

The final proposal to the Panel was the setting up of a sub-group of the Environment and Sustainability Panel, which would be operated in a similar manner to the One Colchester Climate Change Network, but would report directly back to this Panel.

Ben emphasised that all the approaches that could be taken should be as inclusive as possible so that as broad an array of residents as possible could participate in the process. He confirmed that previous engagements carried out by the Council would be analysed to determine the most appropriate method and style of seeking community engagement.

It was suggested to the Panel that as a starting package of engagement, would be a combination of a resident-wide survey to understand attitudes and behaviours in relation to climate change in terms of what actions were being taken to combat climate change, and what could be done in the future with the support of the Council. It was also proposed that setting up the One Colchester Climate Change Network would be extremely beneficial.

Councillor Cory confirmed his support to engaging with as wide a cross-section of residents as possible, and ensuring that not just those familiar with Council ways of working were able to be heard. He supported the carrying out of a baseline survey of residents to determine the current level of knowledge of the climate emergency, and their behaviours in relation to this. He fully supported the setting up of the suggested One Colchester Climate Change Network, and requested that the Chair and Vice Chair of the Environmental and Sustainability Panel be added to this group as representatives of this Panel. Councillor Cory was also in support of wider online forums to seek the views of the public, although he recognised that these would need to be managed carefully.

Councillor Chillingworth commented that it was necessary to be clear on why we were engaging with the community, and felt that it was important to seek views on the work of the Council and the Carbon Trust. He also pointed out that there was a national campaign to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050, and felt that the Council should be playing its part to explain the reasoning behind some of the changes that were necessary to support this work. He supported the use setting up of a One Colchester Climate Change Network, and the engagement of the public via assemblies and surveys.

Councillor McCarthy believed that key to success was to engage the community as fully as possible, and he felt that an effective way to do this would be via online platforms. He enquired whether any information was available on the cost of setting up an online platform, and the level of engagement that had been generated by a similar platform hosted by the London Borough of Redbridge.

Councillor Scordis supported the setting up of consultation an online forum where residents ideas could be seen by all, and it would be possible to see what other people were talking about. He also supported the setting up of citizens assemblies but felt that any such group needed to ensure that different opinions could be heard. His only concern about the setting up of a One Colchester Climate Change Network was ensuring that action was taken as a result of money expended. His preferred options would be engagement by way of survey and assemblies.

Rory Doyle, Assistant Director – Environment, addressed the Panel to explain that he considered it extremely useful to make use of a network like One Colchester that was already in existence which could be utilised quite quickly. As part of the wider work around resident engagement, he proposed that the cost associated with the different methods of engagement would be further examined and reported to the Panel in the future.

Councillor Davidson pointed out that the age group who would be most affected by climate change would be the youngest, and he considered that approaches should be made to school and pre-schools to engage with the children and parents there.

Councillor Whitehead supported the comments of Councillor Davidson, in specifically looking at consulting via schools. He also supported the proposal of the One Colchester Climate Change Network, but did not consider that setting up a sub-group of this Panel was an appropriate action to take. He echoed previous comments on the need for diversity of engagement via residents surveys, and he supported the use of citizens assemblies to encourage discussion and the development of independent ideas.

Mandy Jones, Assistant Director – Place and Client Services, addressed the Panel and explained that there were three broad areas that would be supported by community engagement. The first of these was gaining insight and understanding of the broader issues, and realising what barriers there were to communication and action. The second area concerned the wider issues of engagement and how continued participation would be achieved, and finally the outgoing communication that would lead to behaviour change. The intention was to consider all information obtained, and consider costing and feasibility of developing a broader engagement plan potentially in conjunction with One Colchester. Councillor Cory added his support to this approach, pointing out that engaging with One Colchester allowed communication to be carried out through a number of different organisations, increasing its effectiveness in line with the ABCD approach.

Ben Plummer supported the idea of community engagement via assemblies which allowed residents to formulate their own ideas and not just create a conversation around issues that the Council considered important, even if this led to negative feedback. He updated the Panel on work undertaken with the University of Essex to create climate action plans for schools which was in the early stages.

Councillor Cory noted that the proposal for a One Colchester Climate Change Network had received the most support across the Panel, together with obtaining a baseline understanding of the needs of the community to be used to inform further, more detailed, consideration of additional work to be undertaken.

RESOLVED that the Panel's preferred methods of community engagement be resident consultation, the formation of community groups and the possibility of setting up the group One Colchester Climate Change Network.

10. Positive Parking Review

Richard Walker, Group Manager – Parking Partnership, attended to present the report and assist the Panel with their enquiries. The Panel heard that Colchester's Positive Parking Strategy was one of the first in the country, and the full strategy was due to be presented to Cabinet in November. By way of support for the Policy, Colchester Business Improvement District (BID) had provided a transport paper, and a large public survey had been carried out in February 2019, receiving over four hundred and fifty responses. It was determined that the majority of people travelling in to Colchester at peak times lived in the borough, and the approach to this was one of the key questions to be addressed. The Panel heard that the Policy was balanced between

supporting town centre vitality while addressing issues of air quality and the supply and demand for parking places. The Policy that had been initially prepared was a large document of sixty six pages with eight core themes; Publicity, Perceptions, Promotion, Place/Provision, Prosperity, Environment, Parking Requirements and Online Payment, and of the eight themes, environment was the largest of those. As part of the survey carried out, a large number of residents had indicated their support for electric vehicle charge points being provided in car parks. The Panel were advised that the Policy had been through all required levels of governance of the Council, and following a public consultation in August 2020, the final document was being prepared now. The final policy would focus on four core workstreams based on twelve principals, with environment remaining the top priority. The environmental focus of the strategy was around reduction in carbon emissions, and a number of principles supported this, including setting the quantities and location of parking available and the tariff used, and planning requirements supporting car free development in the future. The Panel heard that the tariffs used were designed to encourage people to think about how they accessed the town centre, and whether it would be more economical to travel in by bus or other means. If people paid via digital means after parking, this data could be analysed to provide information on when people travelled and parked, and whether this was at peak times. Some other initiatives covered by the Policy included using car park land for other purposes at non-peak times, offering a reward to those travelling at off-peak times, schemes that improved access to parking for blue badge holders, low income families and electric vehicle clubs, and the funding of car park improvements.

Councillor Goacher spoke on behalf of the residents of Castle Ward, and suggested that the focus of the policy should not be on positive parking, but rather positive enforcement of poor parking. He gave a number of examples of poor parking which had been challenged by business owners and residents, and asked why more parking enforcement officers were not on hand in high visibility jackets to enforce the rules.

Richard Walker explained that there were forty three Civil Enforcement Officers across North Essex, who issued seventy seven thousand penalty charge notices every year, but that it was not possible for the Officers to be everywhere. Further, the relevant legislation was old and in a lot of cases it was not possible to issue an instant ticket, with the Officer having to wait to ensure that the parked vehicle was not loading, for example. He made the point that the Positive Parking Strategy dealt exclusively with off-street parking, and not the on-street parking that was dealt with by the Civil Enforcement Officers. In addition to this, the Panel were advised that parking on the pavement remained within the remit of Essex Police, and although there was a current survey exploring the possibility of transferring this power to Local Authorities, this had not happened yet.

Councillor Davidson noted the importance of income generation, and enquired what the income generation potential of electric vehicle charging points would be. He also enquired what incentives would be offered to people to encourage them to park off-peak, and whether or not the Council should be trying to compete with commercial car parks offering parking to businesses, or just focussing on the shopping trade. In

response, Richard explained that the style of parking had changed dramatically over the past year and careful consideration was being given to how long stay parking could be used in the future. With regard to electric vehicle charging points, he pointed out that installing these required a careful balance between the developing capacity of new electric vehicles, and the power supply that was available, and he considered that the most likely location for electric vehicle charging points was in long stay car parks where vehicles could charge at a low rate for a long time. It was not considered that these would make any income for the Council over that charged for the parking itself. Incentives were provided to encourage people to park off-peak via cheaper parking, and this had been very effective in the past. In the future means of making parking offers were being considered via the Mi-Permit software, together with encouraging people to make use of the park and ride facilities.

Councillor Whitehead enquired whether business parking could be targeted in the provision of electric vehicle charging points, and Richard Walker explained that there was a scheme called the private non-residential parking levy, and part of this could be used to support sustainable transport and trying to influence the way that people travel into Colchester.

Councillor Cory welcomed the Policy document and requested that an update be provided to the Panel in the future. Richard Walker suggested that an appropriate time for this update to be referred back to the Panel may be at its meeting in March 2021.

RESOLVED that the Panel had considered the report on the Positive Parking Strategy, and noted the contents.

11. Safer, Greener, Healthier – Active Travel in Colchester

Jane Thompson, Project Officer (Transport and Sustainability) attended the meeting to present the report and assist the Panel with their enquiries. The Panel received a detailed update on the plan of Essex County Council (ECC), which was mainly, but not exclusively, concerned with accessing Colchester town centre in a greener and healthier way, including a funding bid to Government to improve the access routes to the town centre. The Panel were advised that Colchester's Future Transport Strategy was being prepared by ECC, and this would be published soon. The aim of the Safer Greener Healthier project was to encourage people to rethink their approach to travel to reduce pollution by providing more choice in terms of cycle hire or other ecologically friendly ways to travel in Colchester, and to change attitudes to support sustainable travel. The Panel heard that across Essex it was intended that the schemes would deliver more walking and cycling leading to improved physical wellbeing, safer streets with less pollution, and a revitalising of local economies and High Streets. Some of the key design principles were influenced by changing Government advice, which now stated that cyclists should be kept apart from

pedestrians and vehicles, and that cycle routes must join together and be consistent, providing direct routes into the town centre. It was suggested to the Panel that the use of tarmacked spaces would be considered in the future, with consideration being given to reallocating spaces from use by cars to use by cycles and pedestrians with clear segregated routes. The aspiration from ECC was to increase the number of cycling trips taken, doubling these by 2025 by providing high quality cycle paths and working with groups such as Love Cycling to encourage greater cycle use. The Panel were advised of some of the proposals being considered for cycling, including shared pathways, cycling segregation and contraflow cycling, where cyclists using quiet one way streets would be able to ride against the direction of travel. Jane suggested that an essential part of improving cycle access to the town centre was to provide secure cycle parking both in residential areas and town centre locations to support people who did decide to travel in this way. As part of the proposals for Colchester ECC were considering school streets, particularly the Norman Way schools and adjacent roads. The aim of this would be to create a safe walking and cycling environment by various method such as introducing a 20mph speed limit or looking to close roads near to pick up and drop off time. ECC will be talking to the schools themselves about these proposals. Within the town centre itself, consideration was being given to services and deliveries, and in particular last mile deliveries via e-cargo bikes which the Panel were aware were already being made available in Colchester. Reallocation of road space may be necessary to reduce traffic and promoting walking and cycling, together with point closures to close roads to through traffic which could be a cost effective way to implement or test out a scheme in an area.

Specific detail was presented on how Colchester was to be included in the scheme through school streets, contraflow cycling, 20mph zones, bidirectional segregated cycle tracks and low traffic neighbourhoods. Currently being considered by ECC was a route starting at Butt Road car park and travelling towards the park and ride side. This would include a contraflow cycleway, 20mpoh zones and some measures within North Station Road to reduce the speed of the traffic and potentially a closure of the road to non-essential traffic. The second priority route for ECC was a route running from Spring Lane to Priory Street, which could include contraflow cycling or a one way system for cyclists. It was important that priority routes linked in with communities and it was explained that they would link in with the local walking and cycling investment routes.

The Panel were assured that representatives from the Council sat on a stakeholder group, together with other stakeholder organisations which met every two weeks and had produced a design workshop group who would look at the details of what was required for each of the proposed routes. If ECC were successful in their bid for Government funding, it was hoped that community engagement would be able to commence in the near future, with implementation of the schemes following as soon as possible after this.

Councillor Cory welcomed the scheme, but stated his preference for greenery to be included in any new routeways instead of just tarmac, which had negative impacts on surface runoff, heat reflection and biodiversity.

Councillor Chapman also wished to see less tarmac and signage, and he further commented that rural areas were not being served by the proposals, and had been ignored in the plans.

Councillor Goacher also supported the introduction of additional greenery along the routes, and further commented that he did not consider that it was a good idea for cycle lanes to be intermixed with bus lanes, and he urged ECC to consider removing shared spaces for cyclists, cars and pedestrians. He expressed his firm support for an increase in secure cycle parking in Colchester.

Councillor Davidson expressed a concern that some of these schemes were very costly, and he wondered whether a more cost effective way forward may be to use shrubs to screen the routes instead of more permanent fixtures. He also sought assurance that businesses affected by the proposals had been fully consulted with at an early, as they may be adversely affected if traffic was stopped near to them.

Councillor Scordis spoke in support of the idea of quiet neighbourhoods, citing the improvements seen in the Dutch Quarter of Colchester since cars had been prevented from using it as a cut through. He voiced concern that the funding for the scheme may be withdrawn by central Government, and he felt that the proposals were necessary to move Colchester forward. He acknowledged the concerns expressed by Councillor Chapman about rural areas, but felt that the initial priority was to deal with the congested town centre areas. In response, Councillor Cory stated that he did support the scheme being rolled out to rural area simultaneously, and considered that having cycle routes that ended at the edges of the town just encouraged more people to drive in.

Councillor Whitehead commented that the plans were positive and ambitious, and was very supportive of low traffic neighbourhoods and the use of point closures to minimise drivers cutting through minor roads by way of shortcuts and to direct them into the main routes.

Jane Thompson confirmed that ECC had not yet wanted to start talking in details with businesses until they had secured the funding and had proposals to evaluate. The Panel was assured that the Stakeholder Active Travel Group which was chaired by County Councillor Mitchell, did represent the business community as well, and this group was well attended by businesses. Work was being carried out with businesses to form the proposals, and more work would be taken on in the future.

Councillor Cory expressed his gratitude to Councillor King for the work that he had undertaken in respect of the proposals in linking businesses with ECC, and the large volume of work that he had put in to help to achieve the fine balance that was needed.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

11. Brief Verbal Update

Councillor Cory introduced the item, and Maggie Ibrahim, Sustainability and Climate Change Manager introduced herself to the Panel. She explained that her remit was to guide the Council and the community towards achieving zero carbon emissions in the decade ahead. Maggie explained that her past employment experience was in the international development sector on climate change, and she looked forward to working with the Panel, Officers and communities.

Rory Doyle extended his own welcome to Maggie, and praised the work that had been undertaken to date by Ben Plummer. He noted that the Panel was due to receive a full update on the work being undertaken with the Carbon Trust at its next meeting, and suggested that as the work was ongoing it may be more appropriate to deal with this item in depth at the next meeting.

12. Work Programme

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

Ben Plummer proposed some amendments to the existing work plan for the next meeting of 17 December by moving the item entitled Discussion of an Interim Action Plan back to the meeting of the Panel in March, and that this report would deal with the tangible actions that the Council would deliver. With regard to the January meeting, Ben proposed removing the item on developing an Environmental Sustainability Strategy, as it was being considered whether this document was still relevant to the work of the Council, or whether it had now been replaced by newer documents such as the Climate Emergency Action Plan. Ben further proposed adding as a standing item to all meetings a brief report on the progress of the Climate Emergency Action plan, summarising actions that had been achieved or progressed since the last meeting of the Panel.

With regard to the suggestion relating to the item on the Environmental Sustainability Strategy, Councillor Cory requested a very brief report on why this strategy may no longer be relevant, and what the different agendas of the Council were that sat under the overarching Climate Emergency Action Plan.

RESOLVED that the proposed changes to the contents of the work programme be noted.