

23 September 2021

Report of	Assistant Director of Place and Client Services	Author	Ben Plummer and Maggie Ibrahim ☎ 508965
Title	Climate Emergency Action Plan Update		
Wards affected	Not applicable		

1. Executive Summary

1.1 This report details key progress made with the Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP), and other relevant updates since the previous meeting on 22nd July 2021.

1.2 Progress includes:

- **Council emissions** reduced by 12.8% in 2020/21 compared to 2019/20. Within emissions monitoring the Council estimated the emissions associated with working from home. Biggest decreases in emissions by percentage were seen in relation to staff commuting and business travel.
- **Clean Air for Colchester update** – Phase 1 of the DEFRA funded signage study saw three psychological behaviour change messages trialled on signs on Brook Street and at East Gates from March 2021 through to May 2021. Two of the messages resulted in a **9% increase in vehicles switching off** their engines compared to before the signs went up. ECC have also received funding to install air quality sensors in Brook Street and the town centre in October. These sensors will monitor short term fluctuations in pollution levels, complementing diffusion tube monitoring in place at the air quality management areas in Colchester.
- **Residential Secure Cycle Parking** – The Council is in the process of agreeing a location for town centre secure cycle parking which is at the planning application stage. The application to change the use of the premises was submitted and now draws close to being decided; with the premises then ready to move into subject to gaining that permission. The learnings from this strand of the project will inform the creation of secure cycle parking in a residential area.
- **Shared travel hubs survey launched** to understand what residents would like to see from a shared travel hub. Two hubs are proposed to be created, with a range of bikes, electric bikes, electric cargo bikes, electric car club vehicles and more being available for residents to use.
- **New social media campaign** on reducing, reusing and recycling waste advice launched in August and will run to end of December 2021. Input from residents, local organisations and Council staff will help to get across messages from a 'real person'
- **Strategy Dialogue with University of Essex Business School** researchers proceeded well. Over 20 participants from Colchester Borough Council (CBC), Essex County Council (ECC) and Community 360 attended the workshop to identify the outcomes, outputs, activities and indicators for the strategy and related action plan. This included a considerations of how the action would be achieved, including the risks and assumptions associated with doing this, as well as the behaviour changes that would be required. This content will inform the creation of the Climate Challenge

and Sustainability Strategy, contributed to by each service area and company. Overall, participant feedback was positive, stating that it gave them a useful way of approaching their work to demonstrate how change could be delivered.

- **Staff travel survey produced as part of the Rowan House use survey.** The travel questions were aimed to review how staff anticipate travelling to work in the future (mode of travel and how often). This was delivered online, as well as visiting Shrub End Depot to gain views of these staff directly where IT access is more limited. These findings will inform the Council's travel plan and the findings will be available for the next panel report.
- **Funding for improving energy efficiency** of homes in Colchester available for residents on low incomes and with homes with low energy efficiency through the Government's Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery (LAD) Scheme phase 2.
- **Climate Action Challenge Fund** made available by Essex County Council for communities to apply to carry out projects that tackle climate related challenges. Community groups, charities and schools can bid for funding of up to £20,000.
- The Council has investigated the option of providing **cloth or hessian reusable bags for market stall holders** and has obtained quotes from its supplier. Options for funding these bags are now being discussed with councillors.

2. Recommended Decision

- 2.1 The Panel is asked to note the contents of the report and to provide any guidance on the progress being made with areas of the action plan, or ongoing work in these areas.

3. Reason for Recommended Decision

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

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 Not Applicable

5. Background Information

Council emissions

- 5.1 The Council monitors and reports on its emissions annually. The Council separates its emissions into two groups; those within its net zero emissions target and those that are not, where these are the Council's indirect emissions.
- 5.2 Within the net zero target are emissions from gas and electricity consumption, fuel consumption (from fleet, staff commuting and business travel), water consumption and waste production. Sources of indirect emissions include those from procured goods and services, investments (Colchester Borough Homes and Colchester Commercial Holdings Ltd), leased buildings and upstream fuel and energy activities.
- 5.3 Emissions reporting for 2020-21 on the Council's net zero emissions target revealed that overall emissions decreased by 12.8% compared with 2019/20 (see Figure 1 below). The majority of this reduction was produced by reduced gas and electricity consumption in Council assets due to these being closed during the Covid-19 pandemic. A substantial reduction in emissions was also seen in staff commuting and business travel as a result of most staff working from home.

Figure 1: Council Emissions 2018/19 to 2020/21

Emission Source	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Council fleet and gas consumption within Council buildings (Scope 1) - Tonnes of CO ₂ equivalent (tCO ₂ e)	4271.9	4258.6	4077
Electricity consumption within Council buildings and from fleet (scope 2) - Tonnes of CO ₂ equivalent (tCO ₂ e)	1687.3	1340.8	1093.1
Indirect emissions from Council operations included in 2030 target - Tonnes of CO ₂ equivalent (tCO ₂ e)	590.1	598.5	236.3
Total emissions within Council's net zero emissions target - Tonnes of CO ₂ equivalent (tCO ₂ e)	6549.3	6197.9 (5.4% reduction compared to 18/19)	5406.4 (12.8% compared to 19/20)
Indirect emissions from Council operations not included in 2030 target - Tonnes of CO ₂ equivalent (tCO ₂ e)	27293.6	26940.8	TBC

- 5.4 However, working from home has an impact on emissions and the Council estimated this in 2020/21. It was found that although gas and electricity consumption increased, the reduction in staff commuting outweighed this emissions increase. Therefore, working from home is estimated to have produced a net negative reduction in the Council's emissions. See information on all emissions on the Council's ['Our Emissions' webpage](#).

- 5.5 Despite this, it is important that staff continue to be supported about ways to work from home in more sustainable ways. Opportunities for doing this and changing behaviours will be highlighted to staff such as changing to greener energy providers and installing LED lighting. Alongside this, staff will continue to receive support about sustainable travel to work, through the Council's updated travel plan.

Clean Air for Colchester Update

- 5.6 Phase 1 of the DEFRA funded signage study saw three psychological behaviour change messages trialled on signs on Brook Street and at East Gates from March 2021 through to May 2021. Two of the messages resulted in a **9% increase in vehicles switching off** their engines compared to before the signs went up.
- 5.7 Phase 2 of the study began on the 10 July and saw larger signage put up in the area. The signage will be up until 12 September, at which point the University of Essex will analyse the data collected to establish the effectiveness of each of the messages to inform the final phase of the study starting in October. Findings from Phase 2 will be available towards the end of September and can be provided to the Panel in an interim report.
- 5.8 In regards to pollution data, the Council monitors pollution at 62 sites across Colchester. Pollution data from 2020 can be found in [the Annual Status Report](#), however due to COVID restrictions and national lockdowns the figures are not representative of normal traffic flow and can't therefore be as used an indicator for the effectiveness of any measures introduced. Essex County Council are installing additional real time pollution monitors throughout the Air Quality Management Area's in October 2021, part of a joint successful bid to DEFRA, which will allow us to monitor more closely going forward the impact the signage is having on pollution levels in these areas.

Other updates

- 5.9 The Council is currently waiting on planning permission to be agreed for a secure cycle parking facility in the town centre. It is the intention that a community bike group will operate out of this facility, providing bike maintenance and repair services. Learning from creating the town centre secure cycle parking facility in the town centre will be incorporated into the residential facility.
- 5.10 The Council has launched a survey to understand what residents would like to see from a shared travel hub in the town centre. Two hubs are proposed to be created using funding from a successful DEFRA bid. The hubs would contain a range of bikes, electric bikes, electric cargo bikes, electric car club vehicles and more being available for residents to use to travel sustainably in and around the town centre on a pay as you go basis.
- 5.11 The Council is seeking views on what modes of transport residents would use/like to be available and where these hubs should be located. A link to the survey is [here](#).
- 5.12 The Council is running a social media campaign throughout August-end of December 2021, highlighting tips and advice to help residents reduce, reuse and recycle their waste. This will include features from local organisations such as Eco Colchester, University of Essex, residents and Council staff to promote the messages. Tips so far have included reusing aluminium foil, using reusable bags and cups and signposting

people to the clothes swap shop that was set up in the run-up to the Eco Festival as well as being there on the day.

- 5.13 In July, staff from CBC, ECC and Community 360 attended a workshop run by researchers from the business school at the University of Essex. The workshop was about creating change and understanding how to review a strategy on creating a change outcome and actions. The [Climate Challenge and Sustainability Strategy](#) and aligned [action plan](#) was used as an example. The outcomes we wanted to achieve from completing actions were examined in more detail, and performance measures, risks to achievement, and behaviour changes required to complete the action were considered. Staff from across CBC attended and found it useful in finding out more about the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan and enjoyed collaborating across service areas.
- 5.14 The Council is reviewing its staff travel plan as part of the Rowan House use survey to see how sustainable travel to work can be promoted, in light of changing working patterns of staff in the future. An online survey was filled in by staff as well as feedback collected in person from staff working from Shrub End Depot.
- 5.15 The Council has funding to deliver energy efficiency improvements to homes in Colchester that are of low energy efficiency (have Energy Performance Certificate below D) and where residents have a combined income of no more than £30,000/they receive benefits. Vouchers of up to £10,000 are available for those living in owner occupier homes to fully cover the costs of improvements such as wall and loft insulation. Those living in rented homes can also get receive 2/3 of the costs of funding improvements, with their landlord needing to contribute 1/3 of overall costs. This funding has been made available through the Government's Green Homes Grant LAD scheme phase 2. Residents who think they might be eligible to the scheme should email climate.change@colchester.gov.uk.
- 5.16 Essex County Council have recently launched a [Climate Action Challenge Fund](#) pot for communities to bid into to carry out projects that tackle a climate related challenge. Community groups, charities and schools amongst others can bid for funding of up to £20,000 and is open until March 31, 2022 or until funds last. Further information about the fund and its guidelines can be found [here](#). This information has been circulated with Community 360, Town and Parish Clerks and all councillors.
- 5.17 The Council has investigated providing cloth or hessian reusable bags for market stall holders to give out. A figure for these has been received from the supplier, and the options are being discussed with councillors.
- 5.18 For further information see appendix 1.

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 for this paper, although several of the projects referenced have consultation elements within them and success in tackling climate change will involve engagement and education of others to influence behaviour change more widely.

9. Publicity Considerations

- 9.1 There are no specific publicity considerations.

10. Financial implications

- 10.1 There are no 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 The updates mentioned in this report are all relevant to tackling climate change and/or improving the environment.
- 14.2 The Council's emissions reduced by 791.5 tCO₂e in 2020/21 compared to emissions in 2019/20. It is important to note that much of this reduction was caused by the closure of Council buildings and facilities due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Despite increases in emissions associated with working from home, positive impacts from reduced travel by staff was noted. As working patterns change, we will continue to offer ways for staff to travel into work actively and sustainably to improve their wellbeing, health and reduce emissions.
- 14.3 Notable changes in behaviour regarding drivers switching off their engines when stationary have been observed during the Clean Air for Colchester project. Improving the air quality in Colchester produces many benefits including reduced occurrence of health problems such as asthma, strokes and heart disease and improved wellbeing.
- 14.4 Several of the actions mentioned in the report (e.g. creation of shared travel hubs and secure cycle parking facility) all help to promote active, sustainable travel. As well as reducing emissions within Colchester, these actions also aim to reduce congestion and improve air quality. They will also help to produce benefits such as improved physical and mental health/wellbeing as well as economic benefits for the town centre through [greater high street spend](#).