

Environment and Sustainability Panel Meeting

**Moot Hall, Town Hall, High Street,
Colchester, CO1 1PJ
Thursday, 24 June 2021 at 18:00**

The Environment and Sustainability Panel explores methods of conservation of natural habitats and biodiversity through adapting existing practices or creating new ecologically diverse environments. The Panel encourages renewable energy generation and carbon footprint reduction in both the public and private sectors by examining air and water quality, plastic and waste reduction and renewable energy generation. The Panel monitors

the progress and implementation of the Council's Emergency Climate Action Plan and regularly reports to Cabinet and Full Council.

Access to information and meetings

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<https://colchester.cmis.uk.com/colchester/MeetingCalendar.aspx>.

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Environment and Sustainability Panel - Terms of Reference (but not limited to)

1. To acknowledge our “Climate Emergency” and translate aspirations into actions.
2. To explore methods of conservation of natural habitats and biodiversity, whether through adapting existing practices and places or creating new ecologically diverse environments with sustainable practices built in.
3. To engage, communicate and collaborate with strategic partners, external bodies, Parish Councils and local communities, to encourage biodiversity enhancement and sustainable practices through their work.
4. To encourage environmental stewardship focusing on carbon footprint reduction by improving air quality, water quality, plastic and waste reduction and renewable energy generation in both public and private spheres across the Borough
5. To be a leading voice for environmental sustainability, promoting innovative environmental practices, having influence across the borough and beyond, including public and private sector policy, at regional and national levels.
6. To promote, monitor and regularly report to Cabinet and Full Council upon progress and implementation of the Council’s Climate Emergency Action Plan and it’s goal to be net carbon neutral by 2030.

COLCHESTER BOROUGH COUNCIL
Environment and Sustainability Panel
Thursday, 24 June 2021 at 18:00

The Environment and Sustainability Panel Members are:

Councillor Julie Young	Chairman
Councillor David King	Deputy Chairman
Councillor Lewis Barber	
Councillor Peter Chillingworth	
Councillor Mark Cory	
Councillor John Jowers	
Councillor Lee Scordis	

The Environment and Sustainability Panel Substitute Members are:

All members of the Council who are not Cabinet members or members of this Panel.

AGENDA
THE LIST OF ITEMS TO BE DISCUSSED AT THE MEETING
(Part A - open to the public)

Please note that Agenda items 1 to 6 are normally dealt with briefly.

1 Welcome and Announcements

The Chairman will welcome members of the public and Councillors to the meeting and remind those participating to mute their microphones when not talking. The Chairman will invite all Councillors and Officers participating in the meeting to introduce themselves.

2 Substitutions

Councillors will be asked to say if they are attending on behalf of a Committee member who is absent.

3 Urgent Items

The Chairman will announce if there is any item not on the published agenda which will be considered because it is urgent and will explain the reason for the urgency.

4 Declarations of Interest

Councillors will be asked to say if there are any items on the agenda about which they have a disclosable pecuniary interest which would prevent them from participating in any discussion of the item or participating in any vote upon the item, or any other pecuniary interest or non-pecuniary interest.

5 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Councillors will be invited to confirm that the minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2021 are a correct record.

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6 Have Your Say!

The Chairman will invite members of the public to indicate if they wish to speak or present a petition on any item included on the agenda or any other matter relating to the terms of reference of the meeting. Please indicate your wish to speak at this point if your name has not been noted by Council staff.

7 Overview of the Sustainability and Climate Challenge stream and next steps 19 - 28

The Panel will consider a report inviting it to note the overview of the work the Council has done on the Sustainability and Climate Challenge portfolio.

8 Climate Emergency Action Plan Update 29 - 32

The Panel will consider a report detailing key progress made with the Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP), and other relevant updates since the previous meeting on 11th March 2021.

9 Work Programme 2021-2022 33 - 36

The Panel will consider a report setting out the draft work programme for the forthcoming municipal year.

Exclusion of the Public (not Scrutiny or Executive)

In accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 to exclude the public, including the press, from the meeting so that any items containing exempt information (for example confidential personal, financial or legal advice), in Part B of this agenda (printed on yellow paper) can be decided. (Exempt information is defined in Section 100I and Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972).

Part B

(not open to the public including the press)

Environment and Sustainability Panel

11 March 2021

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:

24. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Chapman declared a non-pecuniary interest by virtue of his representing Colchester Borough Council on the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership and Joint Advisory Committee, which he Chaired.

25. Have Your Say!

The Panel had received two representations from members of the public, which the Democratic Services Officer had been requested to read at the meeting.

Grace Dark, representing En-form and Eco-Colchester praised the work that had been done in installing solar panels on Colchester Borough Homes properties, and requested confirmation that all suitable Council owned properties had the maximum number of solar panels installed. She asked that Essex County Council's scheme to support private owners to install solar panels known as 'Solar Together' was promoted to Colchester residents and local housing associations via the Council's digital channels.

Andrew Wilkinson, representing En-Form Colchester made comments in relation to item 7 on the agenda relating to the Colchester Woodland and Biodiversity Project. He praised the Council's decision to declare a climate emergency and update its sustainability strategy, together with the Colchester Woodland Project. He requested that the Council give consideration to strengthening its processes by adopting the following:

1. Recognising and adopting the biodiversity hierarchy - Reduce impact, Retain (Save) it is far more important, easier and cheaper to retain existing and established wildlife areas than create new habitat, Rewild, Restore /

Repair, Reintroduce /Replant throughout the council in the Woodland project and planning procedures.

2. Ensuring that wild areas, green spaces, reserves and grade A farmland are detailed in the local plan. Too much emphasis is placed on housing currently. We need to rule development areas out as well as in a much clearer manner. Rule out Local Wildlife Sites identified in the CBC Local Wildlife Site Review for development.
3. To recognise the importance of all species and habitats not just woodland. Grassland and heaths for example are just as important. To formally state this as part of the Woodland Project.
4. To recognise the importance of the area surrounding wildlife habitats and not just the habitat itself. For instance, do not develop up to the boundary of wildlife areas.
5. To recognise the importance of biodiverse green spaces to the health and wellbeing of residents. This has become particularly relevant during Covid.
6. Ensure that residents throughout the Town have local access to wild areas.
7. All wild areas are important, but the large wild areas are of particular importance as wildlife needs space to thrive and residents need space to explore. Urban areas need green lungs.
8. That the council will seek to engage the local residents in decisions and in particular local environment groups.

He further requested that the Council suspend all new major developments apart from those which had planning permission, and a suspension of the Local Plan while future needs were assessed.

Councillor Cory confirmed that the Council was seeking to work with local residents and environmental groups, and in response to the comments made by Grace Dark noted that a couple of years ago the Council had been at the forefront of installing solar panels on its properties, reducing energy bills for residents as a result. It was confirmed that other technologies were being considered to improve the energy efficiency of Council buildings including the Northern Gateway ground source heat pump and air heat pumps, and significant investment had been approved for use in 'greening' projects.

Councillor King, Portfolio Holder for Business and Resources, acknowledged the comments made by Mr Wilkinson, which he was grateful to receive, and which would be addressed in detail later in the meeting. Councillor Cory confirmed that the ongoing work of the Panel and Local Plan Committee would also seek to address the points that had been made.

26. Minutes of the previous meeting

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 28 January 2021 be confirmed as a correct record.

27. Year 2 – The Woodland & Biodiversity Project

Councillor King, Portfolio Holder for Business and Resources attended the meeting and informed the Panel that it was a privilege to be able to introduce a project which effected lasting change. He commented on the level of change that had been achieved through the project in a relatively short space of time, praising the work of Officers and partner stakeholders, who had evolved the project from tree planting into wider bio-diversity care and development. The Panel were advised that the proposed planting would be carried out subtly, keeping in mind the environment, health and the impact on nature, and the emotional impact that the project had generated was a remarkable feature. The real difference that the project would achieve would not be planting thousands of trees, but rather ensuring that people felt a connection to the changing environment.

Rosa Tanfield, Group Manager – Neighbourhood Services, attended the meeting to present the report and assist the Panel with its enquiries. The Panel heard that in considering the work of the project for the second year, five themes had been paramount; planting and greening, urban planting, stakeholder development and planning. In terms of planting and greening, fourteen thousand trees had been planted and the project was now including hedgerows and shrubs, with fourteen sites identified for self-generation, where trees would be enabled to grow for themselves. The use of glyphosate weed killers had been phased out, and in addition to this reducing the frequency of grass cutting of verges was being considered, together with changes to the management of the verges to try to encourage wildflower growth. A template had been prepared detailing how the Council could work with local areas to enable re-wilding and reduce grass cutting. Urban planting was also being encouraged to allow access to green spaces, and the project team had been working with Colchester Orbital and were also working to encourage more planting in the town centre through both current and emerging projects. Public engagement was a key part of the work being undertaken, and the involvement of local communities was encouraged to love and care for their local environment. Despite the difficulties posed by Covid-19, information packs had been prepared and sent to schools with information and guidance, and it was intended to work more closely with the schools in the future. Engagement had been successful through the Council's social media channels through this time and the website was constantly updated. Stakeholder development was key to ensuring that the project delivered a lasting legacy, and public engagement would be a key focus for the project in the future. Particular thanks was offered to the groups Together we Grow, Essex Forest Initiative, the Woodland Trust and the informal stakeholder group.

There were ambitious plans for planting in the coming year, and Officers had been looking at larger sites for this, as well as reviewing how the project could be integrated into existing work and strategies going forward. Additional planting had been considered at the Northern Gateway site, together with opportunities to support the bee line campaign which was aimed at developing a series of insect pathways.

The Panel were shown a short film outlining the impact that the project had on the local community and volunteers.

Councillor Goacher asked for specific detail on how the project would be developed beyond the plating of tree in terms of biodiversity, highlighting the loss of meadowland across the country, and wondering whether any sites had been identified where meadowland could be restored. He further noted the decline in the number of ponds and enquired whether this had been addressed as part of the project, as ponds were a major source of biodiversity. In relation to the wildlife corridors that had been referred to, he enquired whether the public had been approached to improve the biodiversity of private gardens by including them in this work. Councillor Goacher sought assurances that work was being undertaken with the Council's commercial companies to try to encourage their projects to be greener in their nature.

Councillor King confirmed his support for the points and suggestions that Councillor Goacher had made, and noted the need to understand the biodiversity of areas to allow for mixed use of both nature and human access.

Rosa Tanfield confirmed that the project had evolved significantly since its inception, and assured the Panel that the points raised by Councillor Goacher would be part of future considerations as the project was developed further in year three. Of key importance was the continued involvement of stakeholders to engage and encourage private landowners to support the programme and potentially contribute to projects such as bee corridors. With regard to town centre development, Rosa confirmed that her team was actively involved with development work that was taking place and ensured that green issues were considered as part of this.

Councillor Chillingworth offered praise for the project, and in particular the levels of community engagement that had taken place and were planned for the future. He encouraged Officers to engage with Parish Councils as well as the town centre. He noted the difficulty with planting trees that had been caused by the drought in 2020, and he wondered whether the Council had been able to replace trees that had been lost.

Councillor King commented on the importance of an emotional connection to the environment and the importance of stakeholder development. He confirmed that the project had suffered tree losses but these were looking to be replaced. He discussed the possibility of watering new trees, but noted the difficulty in watering the thousands of trees associated with mass planting. He assured the Panel that planting areas were considered very carefully to use the dampest soil with the most shade to mitigate the risk of future losses.

Nick Day, Woodland and Open Spaces Project Officer, addressed the Panel and confirmed that much had been learned from stakeholders during the project, and advice had been sought from the Colchester Natural History Society who had offered advice on where to locate new trees or replace existing ones. Areas suited to grassland had also been identified and mowing would be reduced in these areas to allow natural regeneration to take place. Nick confirmed that he had contacted every Parish and Town Council in the Borough last May, and approximately seven parishes offered to get involved in the project and take trees for planting. The work had been disrupted by Covid-19 lockdowns, but some planting had been able to take

place, and it was hoped to be able to resume planting in the coming year. In response to a question from Councillor King, Nick confirmed that work was being planned in conjunction with a local landscape architect who had set up a landscape conservation trust. Thanks was expressed by the Panel to The Woodland Trust who had replaced numbers of lost trees, together with providing expertise.

Councillor Nigel Chapman wondered whether it was possible to consider small mammal corridors to enable travel between area of woodland, and he noted that unmown verges may be suitable for this. The Panel heard that a Parish Council in Councillor Chapman's ward had appointed one of their Councillors as a sustainability champion, and he wondered whether there was an opportunity for further engagement on a broader scale via this route. He sought assurances that the tree protectors that were used around saplings were ecologically friendly, and would not be a source of litter in the countryside.

Councillor Cory drew the Panel's attention to the Wivenhoe project, where work had been undertaken with Wivenhoe Town Council to identify areas in which grass cutting regimes could be changed to encourage wildflower growth.

Councillor King confirmed that where it was possible, reduced mowing regimes were being considered to allow nature to take over, and he again highlighted the importance of working with others. The Panel were advised that discussions had taken place with Essex County Council as the Highway Authority with a view to examining the routes into Colchester to see where there was potential for re-wilding to take place. He also confirmed that the tree protectors used were biodegradable.

David Carter, Parks Contracts and Volunteering Specialist, confirmed that roads into Colchester had been looked at to determine where it may be possible to change the grass cutting regime to encourage wildflower areas by reducing cutting from every three weeks to once per year. A number of areas had been identified for a trial this year, but it was emphasised that maintaining road safety and sight lines were crucial in determining suitable areas.

Councillor Davidson expressed his opinion that diversity of habitat was very important, and wondered whether grazing animals had been considered such as rabbits, hares and deer to further enhance the variety of wildlife in the area. He wondered whether any areas had been protected from resident access to support re-wilding, and expressed his pleasure at the proposal to start a tree nursery. He suggested that a cycle path from Mersea to Colchester be considered to allow people to access both the town and beach in a healthy and environmentally friendly manner.

Rosa Tanfield confirmed that the tree nursery was an idea that was being explored currently, and would likely be a community led project as opposed to a Council project. She also confirmed that grazing animals were part of an approach taken in respect of Highwoods Country Park where a particular field there was given to grazing animals to encourage different plant and insect life. The Highwoods area was cited as an example of the use of different strategies in land management relating to hedgerows, meadowland and grazed land.

Councillor Whitehead wondered whether a wildlife and biodiversity audit had been carried out to obtain an overall picture of the biodiversity assets though the borough, noting that as work progressed it would be helpful to have an idea of the impact that it was having on the local area. Councillor King noted the current difficulty in obtaining an overview of data on biodiversity and Rosa Tanfield confirmed that there were a number of audits and surveys that had been carried out by national bodies which gave an overview. The Panel were reminded that the project had changed from being specifically about woodland to incorporate biodiversity, and it was hoped that in the future local residents would be engaged to help monitor sites. Rosa confirmed that monitoring did take place on Council sites to ensure that species were cared for and protected.

Councillor Cory offered his praise to all involved in the project, and considered that the long term environmental benefits which would flow from it would generate a legacy that the Council would be proud of.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

28. New Climate Challenge and Sustainability Strategy Themes (previously named the Climate Emergency Strategic Response) and Midterm Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP 2021-23)

Maggie Ibrahim, Sustainability and Climate Change Manager, attended the meeting to present the report and assist the Panel with its enquiries. The Panel heard that previous meetings has highlighted the need for a separation between the Council's overarching strategy, and the various documents such as the Climate Emergency Action Plan. The Panel were advised that the previous Environment Sustainability Strategy had ended in 2020, and a new strategy document was required which would be a comprehensive strategy for the Council contained within a single document, the Climate Challenge and Sustainability Strategy. The Panel heard that a number of plans needed to be developed, including the Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy 2021-2023, the Climate Emergency Action Plan Update 2021-2023, and the Carbon Management Plan 2021-2026.

The strategy development process would go through a number of different phases, and consultations had been carried out with key Officers and Amphora Company members prior to the Strategy being presented to the Council's Sustainability and Climate Challenge Project Board. The current draft Strategy captures the strategic ambition of the Council in relation to sustainability and carbon reduction, it framed the updated Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) and aligns to the Strategic Plan. The Panel heard how the draft Strategy set out the monitoring and communication of progress for the CEAP and highlights progress against the CEAP in 2019-2020, and contained details of how residents and stakeholders could get in touch and support the Council's sustainability and climate related work. In the future, it was hoped that areas such as targets for each strategic theme could be incorporated, together with carbon emissions reduction targets and engagement and

feedback with local residents, and the Strategy would be developed as progress was made.

There were eight themes contained within the Climate Challenge and Sustainability Strategy (CC&SS), including carbon reduction, production of renewable energy, enhancing biodiversity, facilitating walking cycling and sustainable transport, providing sustainable waste management, enabling partnerships and community action, ensuring sustainable planning and development, and changing the way that the Council works in order to achieve these themes.

The Panel's attention was drawn to highlights of the CEAP 2021-2023, including incorporating the Carbon Management Plan into the Council's building maintenance programme, redevelopment of the Shrub End Depot and carbon literacy training for staff. In addition to this, the idea of a 100% renewable energy tariff was being explored, together with the Council's electric vehicle strategy and procurement together with the necessary infrastructure.

Action points for the forthcoming year were explained to the Panel and included the project to decarbonise Rowan House, the design of a development document for the Local Plan on sustainability and carbon reduction, a staff behaviour change challenge, a review of the natural asset list and an exploration of the remaining actions from the Carbon Management Plan 2016-2020 with recommendations from the Carbon Trust. Planned actions that addressed emissions which were outside of the target included updating the procurement policy to include sustainability, encouraging Colchester Borough Homes to begin the process of converting its fleet into electric vehicles and the development of an emissions tracking system.

Councillor Cory welcomed the CC&SS, and requested that net biodiversity gain was a focus of future strategies, particularly with regard to planning matters. Returning to the point made by Grace Dark as part of her Have Your Say! submission, Councillor Corey requested assurances from Officers that the Solar Together scheme would be promoted through the Council's media channels. Mandy Jones, Assistant Director Place and Client Services, advised the Panel that the decarbonisation work that had taken place with the Council's own housing stock had been targeted to achieve the greatest effect, and solar power was part of this process. It was intended that as part of the decarbonisation programme through the Housing Investment Plan was intended to ensure that all Council housing stock would be energy rated 'C' or above by March 2022.

Councillor Chillingworth expressed his opinion that the CC&SS was an excellent way to explain the Council's actions and themes to the public in a clear and understandable way. He suggested that consideration be given to mentioning the Carbon Trust, together with alternate energy sources in relation to vehicle upgrades as hydrogen may be a source of renewable vehicle energy in the future. He advised the Panel that he had received a request from a Parish Council for a presentation to be delivered outlining what action was being taken by the Council, and how Parish Councils could assist with this, a suggestion that was supported by Councillor Cory. Maggie Ibrahim confirmed that the next step to be taken was concerned with

creating a clear engagement plan around the work that was being undertaken, and she was happy to deliver a presentation to Parish Councils.

RESOLVED that the first phase of the Climate Challenge and Sustainability Strategy Themes, be agreed for consultation on this document, and the updated Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) 2021-2023 be agreed.

29. Government emergency authorisation of use of neonicotinoid based pesticides

Councillor Cory introduced the item, and noted that although the government had decided against the use of neonicotinoid pesticides this year, he still considered it important that the Council consider whether to set a principle in the Borough and look to advise and lobby with Members of Parliament to ensure that this pesticide was not used in the future.

Councillor Chillingworth addressed the Panel and expressed his reservations about the matter being brought before the Panel, explaining that he believed that care should be taken on the use of staff resources, to ensure that these were spent on areas the Council could control or which were within its sphere of interest. He did not wish to see the Panel develop into a campaigning organisation, and felt that the focus should be supporting the excellent work that was being undertaken rather than addressing each environmental problem as it arose. He explained why the use of the pesticide had been approved, which was to combat an aphid that had caused farmers to lose up to 80% of their sugar beet crop (a non-flowering crop), which was devastating to such an important crop, particularly in the eastern counties. Councillor Chillingworth noted that some Members felt strongly on the issue but reiterated his belief that continuing to debate it did not constitute a good use of the time of Officers or this Panel.

Councillor Davidson noted that Councillor Cory, as Leader of the Council, was empowered to take action to protect residents, but he suggested that this was only within the Council's own estate. He pointed out that the pesticide was approved for use in very limited circumstances and for good scientific and economic reasons, and he stated his belief that none of the affected crops were grown on Colchester Borough Council land and suggested that it was not for the Council to attempt to influence the situation without realising the economic and rotational disadvantages are from not using the pesticide. He advised the panel that a resistant form of sugar beet was almost ready for use, but until this was widespread, the importance of the sugar production could not be understated. Although seed dressing was used, this did not have a continuing effect, and without the use of the neonicotinoid pesticide, farmers would have to spray every four days with a systemic insecticide which would have a far greater impact on insect life. In summary, Councillor Davidson proposed that the Panel should be guided by the science on which the government was relying, noting that there was a need for safe food and assurances to the public that farming was being carried out responsibly.

Councillor Cory expressed his appreciation of the points that had been raised, however, he reiterated his belief that the Council had a role beyond its own estate, and suggested that the biodiversity loss that would be caused by a reduction in pollinators was a cause for concern. He wondered whether there was a role in the Council for encouraging responsible farming in the future.

Councillor Goacher acknowledged and praised the work that had been undertaken by the farming community to increase biodiversity and to deal with the decline in the bee population. He expressed his support for the comments of Councillor Cory, noting that the support of private residents was being sought in respect of their gardens, and wondering why this request could not be extended to the farming community. Councillor Goacher believed that the work carried out by the farming community would have a wider effect across the whole borough, and additionally he noted that the neonicotinoid pesticides were used in respect of one crop, and questioned the future need for this crop. It was acknowledged that the decline in bee population was not solely attributed to the use of this pesticide, but was also due to habitat loss, and there had been some excellent schemes within farming to address this loss. Councillor Goacher expressed his concern that the position taken by the government on the use of the chemical was divergent from that taken by the rest of Europe, and he pointed out that simply because using a chemical was legal, it did not follow that using it was right, in the same way that the use of glyphosate was legal, but the Council had still taken a view on this.

Councillor McCarthy advised the Panel that he had read an article on the subject in the publication 'Farmers Weekly', which outlined a biodegradable plastic covering which provided significant protection for sugar beet, and he wondered whether this was something on which Members of Parliament could be lobbied?

In the light of the discussion that had taken place, Councillor Cory wondered whether it would be more appropriate to construct a letter praising the government's current decision not to deploy the pesticide, and offering support for responsible farming. Although he accepted the points made about Officer workload, he also wondered whether issues around responsible farming would be of interest to the public should they be discussed at the Panel in the future.

Councillor Whitehead acknowledged that, in common with other members of the Panel, he was not sufficiently aware of all the technicalities surrounding the issue, although he did agree that the Council had a role to play in giving an opinion and shaping public opinion on environmental issues. He did query the change in the position taken by the government in relation to the use of these pesticides, and although he hesitated to form a complete view on the subject, he did have concerns.

Councillor Cory expressed his desire that the Panel say something that was supportive of the farming industry and the current stance of the government, and that the Panel consider the role of responsible farming in the future and its impact in the borough.

Councillor Davidson addressed the Panel in response to some of the comments that had been made, stressing that the sugar industry was an important one, and

expressing his belief that the use of neonicotinoid pesticides was likely to be only in the short term as different ways of combating the issues were implemented such as resistant crops. He pointed out that research into new methods of providing alternative crop protection was extensive.

Councillor Cory proposed that an item be considered for a future work programme to encourage debate around responsible farming and food sources.

RESOLVED that an item dealing with responsible farming be added to the future work programme of the panel.

30. 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 were advised that a grant had been obtained for £528,250 from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme to enable works to be carried out to increase the energy efficiency and decarbonise Rowan House. The works were to include installing an air source heat pump, a mechanical ventilation and heat recovery system, a building management system, extra roof insulation and LEF lighting giving an estimated emission saving of 139.6 tonnes of CO₂, which constituted a considerable portion of the Council's overall carbon footprint.

The Panel were advised of the Council's participation in the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Scheme, which was a consortium grant bid led by Essex County Council, and which sought to provide funding of up to £10,000 per household to install insulation which would improve the energy efficiency of homes. The funding was available to households with low income and the energy efficiency rating of their home was below an 'E' rating. The programme was to run until June 2021, and funds would be distributed on a first come, first served basis. The Council had promoted the scheme through social media channels and via Community 360.

A pilot behaviour change challenge had been launched for staff called 'Hero for Zero', which encouraged staff to adopt an environmentally friendly behaviour for a month, with the aim of instilling behaviour change in the long term. The Panel also heard that a survey had been launched on 8 March to understand how residents heard about the Council's work on the climate emergency, and to raise awareness of opportunities for engagement with the Council's work on the green agenda. The survey was to close on 5 April 2021.

The Panel's attention was drawn to a guide that had been produced for householders which contained useful information on measures that could be taken within the home to increase energy efficiency and lower its environmental impact.

Officers had been working with Colchester Business Centre to assist with the development of an element of their business strategy including corporate environmental responsibility in order to reduce the environmental impact of their operations. Officers were working on developing a key performance indicator to be included in the strategy.

Rangers had been taking several actions to reduce the environmental impact of the teams work, such as using canoes for litter picks in the river, and they had been researching an electric gator vehicle to use in conjunction with an e-cargo bike. Preliminary plans were also being considered for improvement works at the lake and island just outside Castle Park for the benefit of wildlife and carbon capture.

Councillor Cory offered his thanks to all involved in the bid in relation to Rowan House, and encouraged the promotion of the Green Homes Grant scheme through all available channels, if this was not already being done. In relation to the 'Hero for Zero' scheme, Councillor Cory wondered whether consideration could be given to promoting more environmentally friendly diets.

Councillor Goacher enquired what the current position was with regard to electric points for vehicles, as he had received an enquiry from a resident. Rory Doyle, Assistant Director – Environment, updated the Panel and explained that a significant amount of work had been carried out around vehicle charging posts within the Council's own fleet at both Rowan House and the Council's depot, and thought was being given to looking at electric vehicle infrastructure in some of the car parks. A wider strategy around electric vehicle charging was required, looking at the transport strategy in general as opposed to a piecemeal approach, and electric vehicle charging was being encouraged through planning and new development work.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

31. Work Programme 2020-2021

RESOLVED that the contents of the work programme be noted, and that additional agreed items be added to the work programme for the future.

24 June 2021

Report of	Assistant Director Place & Client Services	Author	Maggie Ibrahim ☎ 508965
Title	Overview of the Sustainability and Climate Challenge stream and next steps		
Wards affected	All Wards		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Colchester Borough Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 and committed to become zero net carbon by 2030. This report sets out an overview of the Council's work to date of the key elements of the sustainability and climate challenge project while also providing information on forthcoming work for Councillors to be aware of.
- 1.2 One of the key pieces of work in the past year was a review to assess the need for a new strategy following expiry of the most recent strategy (2015-2020) and to align the content of the Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) to the key pillars of the emerging strategy. The Climate Challenge and Sustainability Strategy ([PDF](#)) for consultation document is now published and available online. The revamped and updated [Climate Emergency Action Plan 2021-2023](#) is also available online and provides readers with enough information to understand each action.
- 1.4 Another key piece of work is to further develop the strategy by identifying an appropriate pathway for carbon reduction which includes carbon emission reduction milestones and key assets and strategies to be reviewed by the Carbon Trust. This will be available by October 2021.
- 1.5 Alongside this is the development of outcomes, targets and measurements of success for each of the eight themes included in the Sustainability and Climate Challenge Strategy. This will be done through an online workshop with select managers from each service area and companies and facilitated by the University of Essex through their Impact Acceleration Award. Once this has been completed, the external engagement on the strategy will be deepened through a range of consultations to more deliberative and participatory methods which the Council is assessing as part of its transformation process. These two pieces of work will be facilitated by the grant from the University of Essex and two separate workshops will be run with Council staff, partners and Councillors.
- 1.6 In addition to the co-created strategy development there is upcoming work looking to strength community energy work, as well as build the capacity of companies for a green recovery.
- 1.7 Also, there is emerging conversations with [Climate-Kic](#) on partnership in order to gain more opportunities for climate finance. These are some of the highlights alongside the 50+ climate emergency action plans which are detailed in the Appendix of the Progress Report.

2. Recommended Observations

- 2.1 To note the overview of the work the Council has done on the Sustainability and Climate Challenge portfolio of work including:
- the development of Sustainability and Climate Challenge Strategy for consultation document
 - a revised Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) 2021-2023
 - Upcoming areas of work – community energy and increasing financial support for the Council's carbon reduction and sustainability portfolio
 - A 2000-word overview of the Sustainability and Carbon Reduction work (see Appendix 1)

3. Reason for Recommended Observation

- 3.1 To ensure that all panel members are up to date on what the Sustainability and Climate Challenge portfolio of work consists of, progress so far, and its forthcoming items of work in order to inform future decision making.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 None

5. Background Information

- 5.1 In 2019 the Council declared a climate emergency, committing to become net zero carbon by 2030. A review of existing frameworks and documents was done, and a new framework was proposed for the Council's Climate Challenge and Sustainability Strategy ([PDF](#)).
- 5.3 A principal aim in undertaking a review of existing documents was to:
- replace the outdated Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2015-2020 which recently expired; and
 - create a separation between the strategic approach and the actions and detailed plans that sit beneath.
- 5.4 The [Climate Emergency Action Plan \(CEAP\)](#) was updated with new projects for the period of 2021-2023 as well as revamped according to the 8 themes of the emerging strategy. Progress on the CEAP will be highlighted in the Environment Sustainability Panel Meetings as a standing agenda item and will also be reviewed by staff and company members every six months to provide any new projects and remove those that have been completed. The updated CEAP has been designed and uploaded to the Council's website with detail of each action included.
- 5.5 The co-production of the strategy with staff and partners is another key area of work that is underway. The participatory nature of the approach allows for staff to embody the change that is needed in their work by providing a space to identify the outcomes, the targets and measurements of success of their set objectives for each thematic area. This will be further developed through the inclusion of carbon emissions reduction milestones identified by the Carbon Trust after a thorough update on the Council current emissions and technical advice on energy efficiency for key assets. Together this work will be available by October 2021.
- 5.6 In addition to the strategy development being co-produced by staff and partners, it will also be shared with residents and community-based groups. A communications and engagement plan is being developed to encourage social democracy and climate action. This is in line with the Council's Transformation process which has three key pillars: enabling community action, innovation and commercialisation. Moving all of these elements forward is a proposal by Officer and University of Essex staff for joint discussion and project development for community engagement for climate action. This will take place in August and a proposal to be ready by September. The external engagement on the strategy will be deepened through this project proposal with a set of agreed methods (i.e., Consultations, forums, citizen assemblies, participatory budgeting).
- 5.7 Another area of work that has begun is an investigation into the opportunity for the Council to support community energy provision. Discussions with Essex County Council, the Energy Hub and Colchester Energy Group (forthcoming). There are currently funds available for community energy, such as the [Rural Communities Energy Fund](#). In addition, there are opportunities to support local business in promoting energy efficiency through advice and support, see [LOCASE](#). Furthermore, [SELEP](#), are looking into the skills and supply chain opportunities arising from the Green Recovery and longer-term net zero transition. Together, this provides an important area of work to both move forward the Council transformation agenda, as well as its climate challenge in reducing carbon emissions through direct and indirect operations.

- 5.8 A further area of work under investigation is how to attract more climate finance to reach the goal of net zero emissions by 2030. Currently the Council is reducing emissions at 5% and if key emitting assets (Leisure World, Fleet and others) are decarbonised, there is still a gap to target. How the Council intends to bridge the gap and finance all the decarbonisation projects required alongside an offsetting plan is required now. Initial conversations with Climate-Kic to gain more opportunities for climate finance are underway. Looking at how we need to position Colchester Borough Council leading councils in the field of climate change and decarbonisation requires innovation in seeking investment and creating new business opportunities, for the Council, its residents and partners.
- 5.9. These are some of the strategic highlights which are more around the evolving approach and direction of work, alongside the 50+ climate emergency actions which are detailed in the accompanied Progress Report June 2021.

6. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

- 6.1 The Climate Challenge and Sustainability and the CEAP will continue to recognise the importance of equality and diversity in all aspects of borough life. A full engagement for the strategy will be developed in the next quarter and will ensure it meets a high standard of equality and diversity. Work has begun with Colchester 360 to ensure that we reach a range of residents from across the borough.

7. Strategic Plan References

- 7.1 The strategic framework outlined above and the programme of work the framework manages, underpins and contributes to all areas of the Council's Strategic, but particularly builds on the themes: 'Tackling the climate challenge and leading sustainability' and 'Creating safe, healthy and active communities'.

8. Consultation

- 8.1 No formal consultation is required as this document is a rearticulation of strategic priorities that have already consulted on. However, consultation and engagement will be a fundamental part of the strategy development and action plans.

9. Publicity Considerations

- 9.1 This update on the Council's approach and direction does not require any media. However, the emerging strategy and updated CEAP will be shared online and through communication channels at the appropriate time in line with the CEAP's newly developed communications strategy and plan.

10. Financial Implications

- 10.1 There are no financial implications directly related to the production of the update.

11. Community Safety Implications

- 11.1 There are no community safety implications.

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.

14. Environmental and Sustainability Implications

14.1 The Council has declared a climate emergency and has committed to being carbon neutral by 2030. This report was delivered remotely to the Panel, highlighting the option to consider remote working to reduce travel emissions when possible.

Background Documents

A review of Council's existing key sustainability and carbon related strategic documents identifies there are a number of past and current documents that are background to this.

Key Climate Related Council Documents	
Climate Challenge and Sustainability, for consultation, 2021 (PDF)	Draft of the climate challenge and sustainability strategic themes including objectives. To be shared with partners, community-based organisations and residents for feedback and elaboration of objectives, targets, and measurements of success.
Strategic Plan and Strategic Plan Action Plan (2020-2023)	The plan sets out how the Council will address the key challenges facing the borough through five strategic priority themes. The Strategic Plan Action Plan contains the actions and is progress communicated bi-yearly.
Climate Emergency Action Plan (2020) (CEAP) and Updated 2021	Climate related actions aimed to reduce carbon emissions and promote sustainability in the borough.
Greenhouse Gas Emissions Report (annual) 2019	Emissions tallied up and available yearly in April.
Pathway modelling and scope 3 footprint analysis.	Baseline of Council emissions and pathway reduction suggestions for direct and indirect (scope 3) emissions. One off and fed into the CEAP 2020.
Overview of Colchester Borough Council Climate Challenge (2021) - Enclosed Appendix 1.	A 2000 word document highlighting the work on the climate challenge and sustainability from 2020-2021. This was submitted to the MJ awards and provides a good overview which is being used for various communication pieces.

Appendix 1: Overview of Colchester Borough Council Climate Challenge (2021)

Summary

Colchester committed to achieving net zero direct emissions by 2030, having already achieved 40% emission reductions (2008-2019) and 2019's further 5.4% reduction. Our [Strategic Plan 2020-23](#) embedded climate challenges as [priority actions](#). Behaviour change is emerging across all services and our companies; a new officer team, member panel, and working groups helped accelerate development, strategies and milestones. All reports now consider sustainability, and all projects assess carbon reduction. 2020/2021's investment included £20m in a renewable heat network, solar park, microgrid, fleet decarbonisation, office and affordable housing energy improvements, 'Future Homes 2025' newbuilds, active travel, woodland/biodiversity creation and youth empowerment.

Submission

Colchester Borough Council (CBC) has always been ambitious in tackling climate change. Over a decade before declaring [2019's climate emergency](#), CBC set a 2008 target to reduce operational emissions by 40% and achieved it by 2019. The new target, for net zero operational carbon emissions by 2030, follows the 2019 declaration.

[Action Plan](#) (initiated January 2020) led to further dedicated human resource with a Climate Emergency Officer and Sustainability and Climate Change Manager to drive a system change within CBC and [wholly-owned commercial companies](#). **To develop a comprehensive, clear and robust plan, setting out how aims will be achieved and measured**, CBC worked with the Carbon Trust (CT); establishing a baseline for scope [1, 2 and 3 emissions](#) (2018/19). The plan identified key projects to reduce emissions, mapped timelines and identified a 'gap to target'. Between 2018/19 and 2019/20, [CBC reduced emissions by 5.4%](#). Having identified 'hotspots', the top three emitters to tackle were our fleet, 'Leisure World' centre, and affordable housing stock.

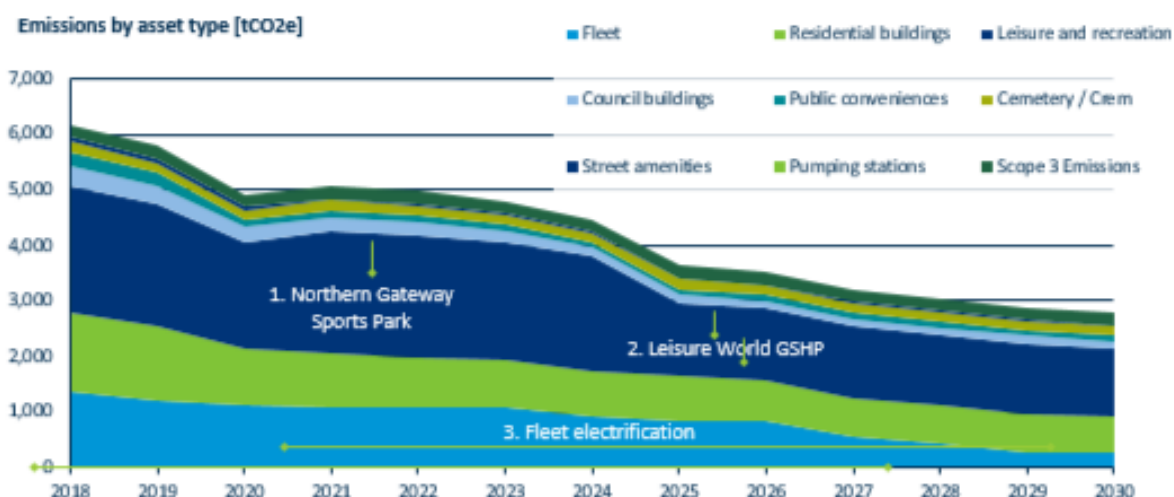


Figure ii. Pathway analysis of CBC's carbon neutral target to 2030. 'Step-change' projects include:

- | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Fleet electrification | - 1,090 tCO ₂ e |
| 2. Leisure World GSHP | - 787 tCO ₂ e |
| 3. North Gateway Sports Park | + 337 tCO ₂ e |

Incorporating this, CBC produced a new [Strategic Plan \(SP\) 2020-2023](#); with a **strategy for sustaining climate emergency as a key priority for the authority's leadership**. The SP response to **Covid (and planning economic recovery)** also recognised carbon reduction opportunities to assist economic recovery, establishing 'tackling the climate challenge and leading sustainability' as a key priority.

Embedding the climate emergency in strategic documents and Council governance was then reflected through the way we work as officers.

A new [Climate Challenge and Sustainability Strategy](#) followed the SP to provide focus on how CBC will achieve its 2030 target through 8 strategic objectives:

1. Reduce carbon emissions from our buildings and fleet
2. Producing renewable energy
3. Enhancing biodiversity and protecting our environment
4. Facilitating walking, cycling and sustainable transport
5. Providing sustainable waste management
6. Enabling partnership and community action for sustainability
7. Ensuring sustainable planning and development
8. Changing the way we work to achieve our climate commitment

These objectives were [collaboratively developed across CBC services](#) recognising that ways of working are key to achieving our 2030 target. This was achieved after creating a 'Climate Opportunities Working Group' across all services and wholly-owned companies. Strategy development includes engagement with key external partners, community organisations Parish Councils and residents to ensure a wider system change. This strategy is being delivered with the University of Essex; their expertise strengthening our strategy development, engagement approach and action plans. Our **strategies for engaging the community will therefore ensure that the response to climate emergency is understood locally.**

The 8 strategic objectives also shaped an updated Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) for 2021-2023, including over 50 actions. Monitoring progress against the carbon reduction milestones and wider CEAP occurs every [two months](#); and yearly with [emissions reporting](#). This work plan is overseen by an [Environment and Sustainability Panel](#) (established 2020); who are continuing to address our **challenging targets and interim, measurable milestones.**

Ongoing work with CT is establishing clear targets up to 2030, based on 2020 emissions data. In addition, a new Carbon Management Plan (CMP) detailing carbon savings and costs of planned and emerging projects is being developed (for 2022-2027). The CMP will sit alongside the annual Building Maintenance Plan to ensure that costing and carbon reduction are aligned and maximise energy efficiency opportunities within maintenance plans.

For new capital and revenue projects, a 2021 'sustainability and carbon reduction assessment' was developed, following iterative learning from 2020's 'climate emergency checklist', to include carbon emissions ranking and calculations. This focus is required to achieve the 2030 target; giving revamped guidance for all project managers. The assessment makes it possible to calculate carbon emissions for travel, fleet and building works, improving new projects from initiation stage, and assessing opportunities to assist the 2030 target.

In 2019/20, all CBC report templates were updated to include consideration of climate emergency impacts. In 2021 carbon emissions are then being introduced for all formal decision-making.

Success in tackling the climate emergency to date is demonstrated through our **innovation across the areas of energy, industry, buildings, transport, nature-based solutions, and climate leadership.** The flagship £6.9m [Northern Gateway Heat Network](#) will provide renewable energy through an 800kW ground-source heat pump, for 500,000sq.ft of commercial space, 350 homes, 300 elderly care homes and a health and medical campus. Using ground-sourced heat, pumped from a confined chalk aquifer, at this scale is an ambitious and innovative factor that led to the scheme being 1 of only 7 to be awarded funding by BEIS (£3.5m) in 2018/19.

During 2020, 5 boreholes were completed, tested successfully, and construction commenced on the first phase of pipes and inspection chambers. 'Phase 2' commenced in April 2021 with the contract to build the Energy Centre to be awarded in July to finish the network. The combination of CBC with (our wholly-owned) company Colchester Amphora Energy Limited (CAEL) meant that grant funding can be combined with Renewable Heat Incentive, improving the economic value of the finished network; in addition to the

significant social and environmental value it delivers. Colchester Northern Gateway Heat Network will deliver 5.5GWhrs of heat per annum when fully developed.

CAEL is already advancing further clean energy generation by developing a £5m solar farm and microgrid to provide renewable electricity. The 5.5 GWhrs a year will be used at nearby CBC assets, reducing existing consumption of other fuels (and consequent carbon footprint), providing an alternative electricity source. The renewable energy will be available commercially to other nearby property to create income, whilst further reducing our carbon emissions and running costs from CBC's estate. This innovation demonstrates the benefits of owning an energy company (expertise, emissions reduction, cost savings, ability to pioneer in low carbon growth).

Another central part of reaching our 2030 target is transitioning our fleet to become fully electric/use low-carbon fuels. Through advice from the Energy Saving Trust, CBC produced a first draft of its [fleet transition programme](#), with 15 electric vehicles (EVs) and 4 hybrid vehicles being procured in 2021; and several [eCargo](#) bikes already in use. Expert advice and experience (from Nottingham City Council) informed implementation of this strategy, with the installation of EV charge points on CBC's estate (charging points also being a CBC planning requirement on all new developments).

As an example of **how plans have been adapted in response to the COVID-19 emergency and the measures taken to identify synergies and mitigate associated risks**, a proactive project was identified to combine the climate challenge priority with the need to create new, additional, construction contracts to help local economic recovery from Covid with a [£4.5m package](#) of affordable housing energy efficiency improvements. The 'Climate Emergency Response Works' were identified in response to March 2020's lockdown and approved in July as a supplementary opportunity for investing as an immediate response to the pandemic.

The agreed improvements are being made to older, lower-performing (EPC rating) properties in Council-owned stock within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). Works include retrofitting homes to increase energy efficiency, through cladding and insulation, replacement of gas boilers with air source heat pumps, and other works.

This is additional to a promise to create 350 new homes (2019-2024) that are now being built to 'Future Homes 2025' standards. The investment in new social housing helps balance the affordability to invest in 'non-income generating improvements' such as energy efficiency. Aside from the social value of these homes, over 25 years the rental return from each additional affordable home exceeds the related borrowing debt with current low borrowing rates of 1-2%. Adding reinvestment of 'Right to Buy' receipts, every new home built reduces long-term debts; making a viable 30-year HRA Business Plan that combines a new-build housing programmes with investment in environmental improvements for existing homes. This means all tenants (new and old) benefit from social (tackling fuel poverty), environmental (carbon reductions) and economic (cost vs. income) value.

CBC's affordable housing stock already has an average EPC of 'C', which compares very favourably when benchmarked with similar providers; but we are determined to keep improving. Currently 2,628 (44%) of 6,500 affordable home have rooftop solar PV and 185 homes were already fitted with air source heat pumps. The first new CBC-owned homes will be occupied in May 2021; all having air source heat pumps and no gas boilers, whilst we are introducing a 'fabric first' approach to ongoing housebuilding too.

Air-source heat and improved ventilation (replacing 30-year old gas boilers and recycled air conditioning) is also central to our 2021 [office refurbishment](#). This carbon-reducing project secured a £527k grant from the [Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme](#) as CBC plans for post-Covid working practices.

Waste also saw a fast response to Covid. The waste target is that residents reuse, recycle and compost 53% of all material. COVID-19 impacted the services by 1% as waste materials generated increased. However, an expected return to target in 2020-21 was delivered by using smart technologies (Dynamics 365) that identified hotspots where recycling rates are poor.

Another new initiative, CBC's [Woodland and Biodiversity Project](#) uses the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach; building on community 'assets' to ensure that the climate emergency is

understood, and actions created through resident participation. The project's aims evolved, from planting trees, to increasing biodiversity through changing green space management. CBC, Together we Grow CIC, Colchester Natural History Society and several local groups worked together in 2020; as residents, students and Parish Councils received 10,000 trees and shrubs from CBC's ([Trees for Years campaign](#)). Participants said they valued the opportunity 'to give back to the community' and 'make things a little better in Colchester' by increasing tree coverage in urban areas.

The [Management Policy](#) also included: 'no/reduced mowing'; phased removal of the use of glyphosate products to 'rewild' green spaces and promote the growth of wildflowers and support pollinators. Schoolchildren designed signage in green spaces, ensuring the change in approach is embraced by the community. With Wivenhoe Town Council and residents, a template was developed for other Councils as the value of green spaces during the Covid-19 pandemic was used to catalyse community involvement in the project.

Active travel also emerged as a key priority due to Covid and the economic recovery drive. A leading example, [eCargo bike delivery service](#) provided deliveries to the local food bank; 25 new bikes and 5 e-trailers were also made available for local businesses to avoid car-borne trips; demonstrating support through green local economic recovery. To date 3,428 miles of eCargo bike use has saved approximately 0.8 tCO₂e. A 'customer' fed back:

'The eCargo bike has proved revolutionary. It reduced the number of journeys using our pool vehicles, is really fun for staff to use and improves their health and wellbeing'.

Marc Yearling, Colchester General Hospital

CBC's eCargo bikes are part of success in delivering activities based on funding that led to us being awarded a third tranche of funding for sustainable modes of travel for 2021-22 ([£248K for e-bike, e-cars and more](#)). Additionally, CBC supported a 150 e-scooter trial in Colchester that has seen over 23,000 journeys and 124 NHS staff join a discount scheme. CBC's Defra-funded 'no idling', CAReless campaign has also been [a success](#) as we continue to improve air quality.

The 'Emergency Access Travel Fund' EATF gave Colchester significant investment for sustainable travel; new high-quality cycleways, liveable neighbourhoods, and new public realm being planned. New working space is being built to help local people in the 'knowledge economy' work locally post-pandemic, reducing commuting travel and air pollution. CBC's 'Fixing the Link' project also improved (train station-town centre) walking routes, whilst the High Street was semi-pedestrianised following lockdown. 2021's EATF adds focus on segregated cycle lanes and school streets.

CBC's strong partnership with the University also enabling collaboration with academics on several projects; recognise the importance of children and active youth engagement to achieve CBC's aspirations. 'Go Green Schools' aims to understand the barriers schools face to becoming greener; a project funded through the [Net Zero Innovation Programme](#), co run by the LGA and UCL.

These are just some examples of Colchester Borough Council's ongoing leadership in responding to the climate emergency.

- END -

24 June 2021

Report of	Assistant Director of Place and Client Services	Author	Ben Plummer and Maggie Ibrahim
Title	Climate Emergency Action Plan Update		☎ 508965
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 11th March 2021.

1.2 Progress includes:

- Starting work with the Carbon Trust to update the Council's emissions projections until 2030 and to produce a brief on carbon offsetting approaches
- Launching the Climate Challenge and Sustainability Strategic Themes that frame the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP)
- Successful rollout of eCargo bikes with champions and within CBC
- 1st stage of psychological signage study completed for Clean Air for Colchester project to encourage no idling in Colchester.
- Updated the Sustainability and Climate Action webpage to provide more information on Council emission and projects related to the climate emergency.
- Supporting the delivery of the Eco Festival to take place on 4th September 2021
- Audited the carried out and activities planned for "Go Green Schools" with a pilot school
- Prepared the presentation planned for 24th June to the Town and Parish Councils on the climate emergency and what they can do to tackle climate change.
- New Sustainability and Carbon Reduction assessment (and guidance) produced to help staff minimise the impact of their projects on the environment and emissions.

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 progress made to date and has the chance to feedback on ongoing work.

4. Alternative Options

4.1 Not Applicable

5. Background Information

Carbon Trust

- 5.1 The Council is working with the Carbon Trust to update the Council's emissions projections up until 2030. This will build on two previous pieces of analysis undertaken by the Carbon Trust in 2018/19 to calculate the Council's baseline scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions, and to carry out pathway modelling to predict the Council's emissions in 2030.
- 5.2 This current work will involve collecting data on several of the Council's high emitting assets, including Rowan House, fleet, sheltered housing and Leisure World. The Building Management Programme that outlines cyclical maintenance work on Council assets will also be reviewed for carbon reduction opportunities. Several projects planned for these assets will lead to significant emission reductions for the Council over the next few years and up to 2030. The Carbon Trust will help to map this out for the Council, in addition to proposing further emission reduction opportunities for these Council assets.
- 5.3 The analysis will also include a review of approaches for offsetting emissions. Offsetting could be used to bridge any "gap to target" that remains for the Council. The principles and approaches for offsetting will be discussed with Council officers and members in a workshop, with a brief on offsetting strategy advice. The analysis will include the Carbon Trust conducting a best practice review of offsetting.
- 5.4 This analysis will be used to inform the development of a Carbon Management Plan for 2022-2027, and give updated milestones for emission reduction in between now and 2030 that will allow us to track our progress.

Climate Challenge and Sustainability Strategy

- 5.5 The Council is currently developing a Climate Challenge and Sustainability Strategy, to replace the previous Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2015-2020. This will guide the Council's strategic response to the climate emergency and frames the Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP).
- 5.6 So far, the Council has produced the '[Climate Challenge and Sustainability Strategic Themes](#)'. This document details the 8 key themes of the Strategy, and also provides information on key highlights for the Council that have been made since the declaration of the climate emergency.
- 5.7 The Council will begin to add more detail to the strategy over the following months through holding meetings and workshops with Council officers to discuss the activities and objectives of each of the strategic themes. Part of this work will be facilitated by researchers from the University of Essex.

Other Updates

- 5.8 The Council has helped to facilitate a successful rollout of eCargo bikes to 10 champion organisations in Colchester, as well as within the Council. Up until the end of March 2021, it was recorded that 3,428 miles had been travelled using eCargo bikes. Before the eCargo bikes were made available all of these miles would have likely been carried out using cars or vans.

- 5.9 The 1st stage of the Council's study to investigate the impact of psychological signage on driver behaviours to reduce idling has been carried out as part of the Clean Air for Colchester project. Learnings from this 1st stage will help inform the next stage of the study with bigger, tailored signs to Colchester being planned to be introduced subject to planning permission.
- 5.10 The Council has updated its [Sustainability and Climate Action webpage](#), so it now provides more information on the Council's emissions and projects relevant to the climate emergency. Information is also provided on how residents can make a difference in reducing their own environmental impact, as well as signposting to the new [Eco Colchester website](#) which is a useful hub for residents looking to become more green.
- 5.11 "Eco Colchester", a community-led group helping individuals to reduce their environmental impact, are hosting the first 'Eco Festival' on 4th September 2021. The Council are helping to support this event, and officers from CBC will be in attendance at the event.
- 5.12 'Go Green Schools' is a project being carried out by the Council and University of Essex in collaboration. Funding for the project has been provided by the LGA and University College London, and focusses on understanding the challenges primary schools face in embedding a consideration of the environment into school practices. The project has so far conducted an audit of current practices at Unity Primary Academy in relation to food, travel, waste, energy, biodiversity and curriculum through surveys and interviews with key staff at the school. From June-September 2021, activities will be carried out at the school to help raise environmental awareness and tackle some of the challenges outlined in the audit.
- 5.13 A presentation to Town and Parish Councils will take place on the 24th June 2021. The presentation will include information on several of the Council's projects that tackle climate change that may be of relevance for the Towns and Parishes to be involved in. It will also make these councils aware of opportunities, resources and guidance to help them to tackle the climate emergency.
- 5.14 The Council has developed a Sustainability and Carbon Reduction Assessment. This has now been included as part of the project management process for staff to complete when creating new projects. The assessment (and associated guidance) will help staff identify the environmental impacts of their projects (both positive and negative) and provide resources and guidance to help them minimise any negative impacts. It will also aim to get projects reporting on the impact on emissions (where this can be calculated). This is part of the Council's aim to 'change the way we work' to support tackling climate change.
- 5.15 Additional project updates can be found [HERE](#).

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 Specific projects, such as the Colchester eCargo Bike Library will contribute to both a reduction in emissions related to travel, but also improvements in physical and mental wellbeing related to active travel.
- 14.3 Clean Air for Colchester focusses on improving air quality in the borough which can lead to better health outcomes. 1 in 20 deaths in Colchester are linked to pollution. It is known that small, easy changes to driving habits, such as switching off the engine while stationary, can cut pollution by up to 30% and this is a key focus of the project.
- 14.4 The 'Go Green Schools' project will help schools to reduce their environmental impact, but will also aim to boost pupil and staff wellbeing through involvement in outdoor learning and nature-based activities. According to [Teach Outdoors](#), outdoor based learning had a positive impact on pupil enjoyment of lessons and understanding of nature.

Environment and Sustainability Panel

Item
9

24 June 2021

Report of	Assistant Director Corporate and Improvement Services	Author	Matthew Evans ☎ ext. 8006
Title	Work Programme 2021-2022		
Wards affected	Not applicable		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out the current Work Programme 2021-2022 for the Environment and Sustainability Panel. This provides details of the reports that are scheduled for each meeting during the municipal year.

2. Recommended Decision

- 2.1 The Panel is asked to note the contents of the Work Programme for 2021-2022. Panel Members are asked to note the addition of a standing item for all future meetings, to provide an update to the Panel in relation to action taken in support of the Climate Emergency Action Plan.

3. Reason for Recommended Decision

- 3.1 The Work Programme of this Panel is kept under review throughout the municipal year to ensure that business is progressed and Members have the opportunity to review upcoming agenda items.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 This function forms part of the Panel's Terms of Reference and, as such, no alternative options are presented.

5. Background Information

- 5.1 The Environment and Sustainability Panel deals with existing and emerging environmental issues, and will focus on carbon footprint reduction and monitoring and supporting the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan.
- 5.2 The Panel's Work Programme will evolve as the Municipal Year progresses and items of business are commenced and concluded. At each meeting the opportunity is taken for the Work Programme to be reviewed and, if necessary, amended according to current circumstances.

6. Standard References

- 6.1 There are no particular references to publicity or consultation considerations; or financial; equality, diversity and human rights; community safety; health and safety, environmental and sustainability implications or risk management implications.

7. Strategic Plan References

- 7.1 Environmental Sustainability is integral to the delivery of the Strategic Plan's priorities and direction for the Borough as set out under the four themes of growth, responsibility, opportunity and wellbeing.

WORK PROGRAMME 2021-22

Environment and Sustainability Panel
Meeting date / Agenda items -
Environment and Sustainability Panel - 24 June 2021
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Work recap and plan for the year ahead.2. Climate Emergency Action Plan – Progress Update.
Environment and Sustainability Panel – 22 July 2021
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Waste & Recycling and the Environment Bill2. Climate Emergency Action Plan – Progress Update
Environment and Sustainability Panel – 16 September 2021
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Woodland and Biodiversity Update2. Climate Emergency Action Plan – Progress Update

Environment and Sustainability Panel – 25 November 2021
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Social Value Portal and green procurement 2. Climate Emergency Action Plan – Progress Update
Environment and Sustainability Panel – 13 January 2022
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pathway for net zero emissions by 2030 2. Climate Emergency Action Plan – Progress Update
Environment and Sustainability Panel – 24 February 2022
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy & Electric Vehicles 2. Climate Emergency Action Plan – Progress Update
Environment and Sustainability Panel – 22 March 2022
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Summary of progress in 2021/2022 2. Climate Emergency Action Plan – Progress Update

