

Appendix 1: Draft Climate Challenge and Sustainability Strategy Themes

Colchester Borough Council is leading the way in promoting sustainability and carbon Reduction. This new *Climate Challenge and Sustainability Strategy Themes* continues to build on years of dedication and achievement and will evolve through consultation with stakeholders and innovation in the industry.

In 2019, we ranked among the top 10 local authorities in the Friends of the Earth's performance review in different categories including renewable energy, public transport, lift-sharing, energy efficiency at home, waste recycling, and tree cover. In the same year, we declared a climate emergency.

As a responsible Local Authority, we know that we have an important role to play in promoting sustainability and reducing carbon emissions. In 2020 we published our Council's [Strategic Plan 2020-2023](#) with *tackling the climate challenge and leading sustainability* as a key priority. We also developed our [Climate Emergency Action Plan](#) highlighting how we will reduce greenhouse gas emissions to reach carbon neutrality by 2030.

In 2021, we recognise the need to replace our recently expired Environmental Sustainability Strategy (2015-2020) with an evolving and comprehensive *Climate Challenge and Sustainability Strategy Themes*. Will be developing our strategy and updating our themes through consultations with residents and partnership work. To date, it includes 8 strategic themes:

- 1. Reduce carbon emissions from our buildings and fleet to help achieve a net zero Carbon footprint for Council Services by 2030.**
 - Reduce carbon emissions from our existing buildings through use of insulation, solar panels, air source heat pumps and other technologies.
 - Change our petrol/diesel vehicles to electric vehicles and invest in appropriate charging stations for current and future use.
- 2. Produce renewable energy**
 - Develop a low carbon heat network for Northern Gateway South with open loop ground source heat.
 - Explore options for delivering a micro grid and solar farm to produce and increase the use of renewable energy.
- 3. Enhance biodiversity and protect our environment**
 - Enhance environments to create more space for nature to grow and thrive through natural seeding and greening.
 - Work with communities and groups in enhancing and protecting the natural environment
 - Plant native species and manage our woodlands, meadows and greenspace whilst sustaining existing habitats.
- 4. Facilitate walking, cycling and sustainable transport around Colchester**
 - Work with Essex County Council to install and improve facilities, infrastructure and routes for cyclists and walkers to enable active travel, healthier lifestyles, reduce car use and improve air quality.
 - Provide, support and encourage the take up of a range of sustainable transport choices by residents, businesses and our workforce.

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- Work with Essex County Council and other partners to implement the emerging Colchester Transport Strategy which includes strategies to develop measures to reduce traffic in the town centre and improve air quality.
- 5. Provide sustainable waste management and support residents to reduce, reuse and recycle**
 - Engage, educate and support residents to reduce, reuse and recycle their waste.
 - Sustainably minimise the environmental impact of the whole system of waste generated and collected by the Borough.
 - Implement a switch to electric vehicles over an appropriate time for our waste collection service.
- 6. Enable partnerships and community action for sustainability and low carbon development**
 - Discover, nurture and enable the work led by communities that promotes adaptation, sustainability and environmental behaviour.
 - Work alongside communities to maintain clean, green neighbourhoods and urban spaces that we all look after and enjoy.
 - Enable partners to implement and improve workplace travel plans, creating a shift toward active travel and clean air.
- 7. Ensure sustainable planning and development**
 - Ensure sustainable transport is provided as part of major development and regeneration projects.
 - Develop and implement policies and guidance (i.e., Local Plan, Supplementary Planning Documents, Sustainable Planning Checklist, Essex Design Guide Climate Change Supplement) to secure multi-functional green spaces, flood prevention, carbon reduction and sustainable travel through the planning process.
 - Train planners in latest policies and guidance for effective review of planning applications to support our goal of zero carbon by 2030.
- 8. Change the way we work to achieve our climate commitment**
 - Ensure internal strategies and policies are consistent with our climate emergency declaration and commitment for net zero carbon by 2030
 - Strengthen our assessment of climate and environmental impacts in all decision making and reporting, including project development processes.
 - Develop and roll out a climate change learning and development programme for staff and members to improve understanding of carbon and wider environmental context.

As a Local Authority, we have a responsibility to both evolve and act on our strategy. We updated our Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) to include actions under each of the strategic themes as well as additional actions. This CEAP 2021-2023 will be reviewed bi-annually showing progress across the themes. This progress is possible by working in partnership with community groups, business, Essex County Council and other government agencies.

Our top ten highlights of our joint achievements in 2019-2020 include:

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1. Successfully completed trialling boreholes and testing the innovative Northern Gateway District Heat Network (the biggest of its kind in the UK); before starting to construct the infrastructure to connect to the future development and provide renewable heat to new businesses and homes.
2. Agreed an additional £4.5m of supplementary works to the Council's affordable housing stock that will add to the existing "retrofitting" of:
 - 2,628 homes with solar panels (44% of stock) providing renewable energy to heat homes.
 - 185 air source heat pumps that replaced gas boilers, removing 400-600 tonnes of CO₂ according to the [Energy Saving Trust's Guide to air source heat pumps](#).
 - 1 ground source heat pump and 2 gas absorption heat pumps across 3 of our sheltered housing buildings, resulting in a decrease of carbon emissions.
3. Started construction of our "New Council Housebuilding Programme" in which all properties are being built to the principles of the "Future Homes 2025" Standards, ahead of others.
4. Established:
 - An environmental checklist for staff and developers to consider the environmental impacts of new projects and how they can reduce them; and
 - The [Householders Guide to Sustainability and Energy Efficiency Improvements](#) to help residents to reduce their impact on the environment and make their homes more comfortable
5. Implemented the start of a strategy to swap petrol/diesel fuelled vehicles for those powered by renewable energy with appropriate timeframes for reducing emissions by at least 90% by 2030.
6. Introduced a "No Idling" policy and campaign to ensure that Council and other vehicles turn off their engines when stationary, helping to improve air quality and health for staff and Colchester residents.
7. Adopted the Colchester Cycling Action Plan as a special planning document to help developers provide or contribute towards cycling infrastructure and promotion.
8. Evolved the first *Fixing the Link* initiative, to better link the train station to town centre to encourage arriving by train and walking into the town centre and promote active travel. This is the first to be developed in the east of England.
9. Used smart technologies, such as Dynamics 365, to unify our data. For recycling tracking, this shows heatmaps of problem spots for collections where residents need more encouragement to recycle. The insights help us improve recycling services and reduce the amount of waste for the landfill.
10. Created a new [Environment and Sustainability Panel](#) for Members to receive updates on work related to sustainability and carbon reduction and provide guidance to Council operations.

Are you passionate about protecting the environment while also promoting low carbon growth? There are several opportunities to get involved in the Council's work. If you want to learn more go to: <https://www.colchester.gov.uk/sustainability/>

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Have any questions about this area of our work? Do you have feedback on our Climate Challenge and Sustainability Themes? Contact Us:

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