

28 January 2021

<b>Report of</b>	<b>Assistant Director of Place and Client Services</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Ben Plummer and Maggie Ibrahim</b>
<b>Title</b>	<b>Climate Emergency Action Plan Update</b>		<b>☎ 508965</b>
<b>Wards affected</b>	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 17<sup>th</sup> December 2020.

1.2 Progress includes:

- The Council has received a proposal from the Carbon Trust for the new Carbon Management Plan for 2021-23 for review. Work will begin on creating this plan in February 2021, with the plan expected to be completed by June 2021.
- Update on Air Quality Project, including response to questions and comments from Panel members. Information gives updates on signage, mobile pollution sensors and traffic light timers.
- The Council will be refreshing its Asset Management Strategy for April 2022-March 2027, which will reflect the Council's Climate Emergency declaration.
- The Council will be going out to tender for the installation of electric vehicle charge points in Rowan House.
- Council has submitted greenhouse gas emissions data to Local Government Association to take part in an emissions benchmarking exercise with other local authorities.
- Highwoods team have purchased an electric chainsaw to replace their petrol chainsaw.
- Formation of a Climate Opportunities Working Group (COWG) and revamping of membership and mandate of the Sustainability and Climate Challenge Project Board. Terms of Reference are finalised and first meeting scheduled of the COWG is for January 21, 2020.

## 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.

## 3. Reason for Recommended Decision

3.1 This report is for information only.

## 4. Alternative Options

4.1 Not applicable

## **5. Background Information**

### **Carbon Management Plan**

- 5.1 As discussed at the previous Environment and Sustainability Panel (ESP) meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2020, the Council is working with the Carbon Trust to create a new Carbon Management Plan for 2021-23.
- 5.2 The Carbon Management Plan produced will identify key actions the Council will carry out between 2021-2023 to reduce carbon emissions from its operations. Other key elements of the Carbon Management Plan include:
- Setting an emissions reduction target for the Council for 2023, relative to 2018/19 baseline emissions. An additional milestone(s) for emissions reductions will also be set for interval years up until 2030 to ensure the Council stays on target to reach net zero emissions by 2030.
  - Review of options for offsetting carbon emissions, based on existing practice from other local authorities and in the private sector. The Council will also seek to establish some key principles in our approach to offsetting.
  - Consideration of broad areas of action beyond 2023 for reducing carbon emissions.
- 5.3 The Carbon Trust will work with the Council to collect relevant data to inform the creation of the Carbon Management Plan. This work will begin in February 2021 with the final Carbon Management Plan expected to be finished by June 2021.

### **Air Quality Project**

- 5.4 At the ESP meeting on the 29<sup>th</sup> October 2020 officers provided an update on the DEFRA funded Clean Air Project with a focus on the CAREless Pollution no idling campaign launched on 8 October 2020. During the meeting, a number of questions relating to road-side signage and traffic light timers were raised. An update on these elements of the project has been provided below.

#### **Signage**

- 5.5 The signage project aims to test the effectiveness and long-term impact road-side signage, based on psychological messaging, has on vehicles idling. The project builds on research carried out on road-side signage in Norwich and Canterbury. The signage will be fixed to existing street furniture, the locations of which have been checked for suitability and agreed by Essex County Council, on Brook Street and East Street (East Gates Rail Crossing). All locations sit within an Air Quality Management Area.
- 5.6 A planning application for the signage was granted in October 2020 and a project plan, timeline, methodology and training have been developed with the University of Essex, the appointed Research and Evaluation Partner for the project. A bank of casual staff has been recruited and trained as research assistants to collect traffic data to monitor, on a monthly basis, the effectiveness of the signs. Baseline traffic counts are expected to take place at the start of February with the signage going up shortly after.

#### **Mobile Pollution Sensors**

- 5.7 As part of the signage project, mentioned above, CBC received funding from DEFRA to buy portable pollution monitors. The aim is for the monitors to be worn by the research assistants when they are at the signage locations. This will provide us with real-time

roadside pollution levels to supplement readings from the diffusion tubes and the traffic count data. This means we can start to build up an accurate picture of how effective the signs are and what impact they are having on pollution levels within the AQMA. Six portable monitors have been purchased in preparation for the signage counts. The monitors will be made available for use by schools when they are not being used by the research assistants.

### Traffic Light Timers

- 5.8 The Council was awarded a second round of funding from DEFRA in March 2020 for a feasibility study into countdown timers on red traffic lights. It was following findings from CBC's community engagement in which 56% of people said they would regularly switch their engine off if they knew how long they would be waiting at red lights.
- 5.9 The feasibility study has been carried out in liaison with Essex County Council and the Transport Research Laboratory (TRL) who are the developers of the SCOOT technology which runs on traffic lights across Essex. The feasibility work has concluded that it will not be possible to integrate a timer onto traffic lights in Colchester. A timer will only work on 'fixed sequence' traffic lights and not SCOOT operated lights.
- 5.10 This is because SCOOT automatically adjusts the traffic signal timings to adapt to current traffic conditions, using flow data from traffic sensors. This means the timings change making it impossible to give an accurate per-second countdown. The example given by TRL to explain what would happen with a timer on SCOOT controlled lights is:

"There is always the possibility that you get a 'countdown' which goes **7,6,5,0** or **7,6,5,8,7,6**.... Which could naturally cause some confusion for drivers".

We also received confirmation from Essex County Council that the lights could not be changed to a fixed time pattern and would be required to stay under SCOOT control.

- 5.11 Alternative options have been explored, including the upgrade of SCOOT technology to link traffic lights on Brook Street to an electronic message board that gives drivers information on estimated wait times at the traffic lights, based on information from the traffic light operating system.

This option has been fully explored with input from Essex County Council and due to cost and the need for TRL to take over control and monitoring of the lights for the duration of the trial it has been concluded that the cost would far outweigh the expected air quality benefits.

- 5.12 There is an option to include approximate wait times at the traffic lights into messaging planned for future road-side signage, timings will be dependent on the testing of the initial messages for which we have received planning permission.

### Other items

- 5.13 The Council is refreshing its Asset Management Strategy for the housing stock, and this will reflect the Council's Climate Emergency declaration in its design, whilst also being affordable and achievable. The refreshed strategy will go to Cabinet in September 2021 and will run from April 2022-March 2027.

- 5.14 The Council is due to go out to tender shortly for the installation of electric vehicle charging points in Rowan House, which will support the Council's fleet transition to electric vehicles.
- 5.15 The Council has submitted data on its greenhouse gas emissions into an emissions benchmarking exercise being conducted by the Local Government Association. This can then be used to compare the Council's performance on this agenda against other local authorities.
- 5.16 Recently the Highwoods team purchased an electric chainsaw to replace the petrol chainsaw that was stolen from the premises. This is a good example of staff considering the opportunity to switch to greener products to carry out their work.
- 5.17 The mandate and membership of the Sustainability and Climate Challenge Project Board (S&CC PB) has been updated alongside the creation of a Climate Opportunities Working Group (COWG). This is to ensure that sector and project leads of the Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) are the ones to update and drive the creation of the new CEAP 2021-23, innovate and share knowledge together, while the Board focuses on ensuring progress, considering proposals, addressing any issues that arise, and strategic direction of the CEAP in relation to other opportunities.

## **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 In this section show that consideration has been given to the timing and method of consultation. Also give an indication of what will happen to the responses.

## **9. Publicity Considerations**

- 9.1 There are no publicity considerations

## **10. Financial implications**

- 10.1 There are no financial implications.

## **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 updates mentioned in this report all relate to the climate emergency declaration and aim to reduce the environmental impact of the Council's operations.