

7 December 2021

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

1. Executive Summary

1.1 This report details key progress made with the Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP), and other relevant updates since the previous meeting on 23rd September 2021.

1.2 Progress includes:

- **Single-use plastics update** – The Council has been phasing out the use of single-use plastics through much of its operations. Included in this report are updates from the Council's leisure centres and Museums team.
- **Clean Air for Colchester update** – An evaluation of the project has been completed, showing several positive proxy indicators of improvements in air quality. Survey findings have shown that 22% of people switching off significantly more than before, and 31% some more than before. Additionally, increase in driver switch offs have been shown to increase by 9% with psychological signage present. The project has built a good baseline of awareness, action and community engagement that will continue to be built on in the coming years.
- **Asset Management Strategy** for housing stock is currently being reviewed. As part of this work, the costs for reducing emissions of the housing stock to various energy performance targets have been calculated to be £120 million for the stock to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2030. Several new Council homes have been recently handed over to residents, with the properties built to Future Homes Standard and with air source heat pumps installed.
- **Home burning awareness campaign launched** to increase public knowledge about the impact wood burning can have on air quality. The campaign will focus on encouraging residents to burn wood less, burn seasoned wood rather than wet wood to help reduce the production of particulate matter from wood burning. The campaign will take place between November 2021-March 2022.
- **Electric vehicles** for the Council's fleet are due to arriving in early 2022. Hybrid vehicles are due to arrive slightly before the full electric vehicles. Two electric vehicles have already been purchased by the North Essex Parking Partnership for use in their Park Safe scheme.
- **Electric vehicle charging points** to be installed in Priory Street car park as part of a pilot. This install will start to take place in early December, ready to be in service for use before Christmas.
- **Tree planting days** for public to attend have been announced, taking place between November 2021-February 2022. These are published on the Council's [website](#).

- **Funding for improving energy efficiency** of homes in Colchester available for residents on low incomes and with homes with low energy efficiency through the Government's Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery (LAD) Scheme phase 2. Further information can be found at www.colchester.gov.uk/greenhomesgrantlad2, and enquiries/applications for the grant can be made through www.warmworks.co.uk/greenhomesgrant or by calling 0808 196 8255
- **Climate Action Challenge Fund** made available by Essex County Council for communities to apply to carry out projects that tackle climate related challenges. Community groups, charities and schools can bid for funding of up to £20,000. More information about the fund is available at www.essex.gov.uk/leisure-culture-local-heritage/culture-and-communities (first fund listed on this page)
- **Several key communications** on social media produced as part of awareness raising linked in with the Conference of Parties in Glasgow during November. This included simple changes residents could make to reduce their environmental impact and a infographic showing highlights of the Council's work on the climate emergency during 2020 and 2021.

2. Recommended Decision

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

3. Reason for Recommended Decision

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

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 Not Applicable

5. Background Information

Single-Use Plastics Update

- 5.1 The Council has reduced its use of single-use plastics throughout many of its operations. Where possible, reusable and plastic-free alternatives for products are considered in the procurement of new products. Updates are provided on the reduction of single-use plastics in Leisure World Colchester, Leisure World Northern Gateway Sports Park and at the Council's Museum venues.
- 5.2 At Leisure World Colchester and Leisure World Northern Gateway Sports Park, the following measures have been implemented to reduce the use of single-use plastics:
- All cups (including slush cups) are Vegware and are fully compostable. Compostable straws from Vegware and 100% recycled paper straws are available for customers
 - Customers can fill up their own water bottle, reducing the need for single-use plastic bottles of water
 - Only sell drink cartons without plastic straws – Offer paper straws if requested by customer
 - Installation of a milk pergal at Leisure World Colchester. This uses bagged milk in boxes, eliminating the purchase of 1500 plastic milk bottles each year. At Northern Gateway Sports Park 1.5 litre bagged milk is used instead of bottles as there is not room for a milk pergal. Single portion plastic milk cartons are not sold at both cafes in each location
 - Plastics recycling collections at both location for recycling of any plastic bottles
 - Plastic Lucozade, Ribena and Coca-Cola bottles are sold at both sites. However, Lucozade and Ribena are sold by the same company (Suntory) and they will be using 100% recycled plastic bottles from 2022, and Coca-Cola now use 100% recycled plastic bottles since September 2021.
- 5.3 Impacts of these changes on sales and waste volumes cannot currently be compared due to the impact of the pandemic, but this will be investigated in future years. Further information about the reduction of single-use plastics at the leisure venues can be found in Appendix 1.
- 5.4 The Museums team has put in significant work to think about how to reduce the use of plastics and waste in their sales lines as well as throughout their exhibitions. Some examples of actions that have been taken are below:
- Repurposing display materials such as plinths and risers so they can be used for future exhibitions
 - No plastic bags are sold at any museum venue. Paper bags are sold upon request, and reusable cotton bags are on sale, of which 151 have been sold since May 2021.
 - Using paper 'buff tags' rather than plastic labels. A green stamp on products will be used to highlight the removal of packaging.
 - Plastic kimbles for holding products together and for hanging products on stands have been replaced by buff tags or having price points on a stand rather than hanging from a rail.

Clean Air for Colchester Update

- 5.5 The Clean Air for Colchester project has been running from July 2019 – September 2021. The project has had several different focusses, including the CAREless Pollution

campaign, roadside signage trial and the promotion of walking and cycling amongst residents. A summary of each of these areas is outlined below. A public facing summary document of the whole document will be published in the new year.

- 5.6 **CAREless Pollution Campaign** – This campaign was focussed on raising awareness of air pollution in Colchester and encouraging residents to switch off their vehicle engines when stationary to improve air quality. Engagement with schools, local organisations and residents has been carried out at a variety of pop-up events and ‘stunts’ across the town. Surveys after the campaign have shown that residents are switching off their engines more than they did before the campaign. Specifically, 22% of surveyed respondents said they switched off significantly more than they did before, and 31% switching off some more than before. Surveys outside school gates show 65% of people were switching off their engines more than a year ago.
- 5.7 **Roadside signage trial** – Signage to promote no-idling was installed in the air quality management area in Brook Street, specifically at the traffic lights at the bottom of the street and at East Gates. The trial has gone through various phases testing out the influence of different messages on driver no-idling behaviour. Four different messages have been trialled over the course of the campaign, with three leading to a 9% increase in drivers switching off engines when stationary. These messages were:
- 'Think about your actions. When the traffic lights are red/ barriers are down please switch off your engine'. This aims to get drivers to reflect on their behaviour.
 - 'Join other responsible drivers in Colchester Turn off your engine when the traffic lights are red/ barriers are down'. This aims to get drivers to think about their responsibility to act.
 - 'Exhaust fumes build-up in your car while you wait. Switch off your engine. Protect your health'. This aims to get drivers to think about the health implications of their actions.
- 5.8 The roadside signage trial is set to continue to June 2022, to see if switch off rates decrease and the messages stop being effective.
- 5.9 **Promotion of walking and cycling** – Encouraging walking and cycling more for short journeys is a key way to improve air quality in Colchester. The project has aimed to promote walking and cycling in Colchester, both to schools and residents. It has involved an evaluation of bikeability training at schools to see the benefits school children have experienced from taking part in the training, as well as what they would like to do more of on the training. Additionally since July 2021, a project has been started in Monkwick to support residents to walk and cycle more. So far 5 Dr Bike sessions (servicing 79 bikes), 1 adult and 1 child learn to ride session (4 adults and 3 children attending respectively), and 1 led walk and talk and 1 led walk and ride session (10 people attending in total) have been organised. A map of the off road cycle route from Monkwick to town has also been sent to 800 households on the estate. The positive work so far delivered on the project, set up in collaboration with En-Form, is set to continue into 2022.
- 5.10 Although positive signs indicate that residents are more aware of the impacts of air quality and are switching off their engines more, the project has not been able to accurately measure improvements in air quality within the air quality management areas (AQMA's). This is due to traffic flows reducing drastically during 2020. Pollution levels reported in the Annual Status Report published in early 2022 will help to more accurately show the impact the project has had on pollution levels. Monitoring pollution in the AQMA's will be improving in 2022, with the introduction of air quality monitors in these areas providing live pollution data, allowing us to immediately see the impact of different interventions on pollution levels in real time.

Other updates

- 5.11 The creation of the asset management strategy for the Council's housing stock is currently being reviewed. A key element of this new strategy will focus on reducing emissions from the housing stock. Part of the work completed in the strategy development involved the costing of reducing emissions from the housing stock to varying energy performance standards. It was calculated that the estimated cost for the stock to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2030 would be £120 million.
- 5.12 Several new Council homes have recently been built to Future Homes Standard, and installed with air source heat pumps. These homes are built to standards that will deliver reductions in carbon emissions of 75-80% compared to current building regulations.
- 5.13 The Council has recently launched a public awareness campaign around the air pollution produced from woodburning. Woodburning is one of the largest contributors to particulate matter air pollution and this is largely unrecognised. Therefore, the campaign will aim to encourage residents to burn wood less, and to burn seasoned wood rather than wet wood as this produces less particulate matter. Promotional activities will occur both online and in person.
- 5.14 The Council will be receiving electric and hybrid vehicles, to help with the decarbonisation of its fleet from early 2022. North Essex Parking Partnership has already taken delivery of two electric vehicles which will be used for the Park Safe scheme.
- 5.15 As part of a pilot project, several electric vehicle charging points are to be installed in Priory Street Car Park. These will be part of a wider change to help residents feel more confident about transitioning to using an electric vehicle. The charging points will be installed in early December, ready for customer use before Christmas.
- 5.16 Throughout November-February 2022, the Council will be running many tree planting days across the borough as part of the Woodland and Biodiversity Project. The locations for the tree planting can be found on the Council's [website](#). The trees will also be planted with biodegradable rabbit guards around them, reducing the use of plastic guards.
- 5.17 The Council has funding to deliver energy efficiency improvements to homes in Colchester that are of low energy efficiency (have Energy Performance Certificate below D) and where residents have a combined income of no more than £30,000/they receive means tested benefits or Council tax reduction. Vouchers of up to £10,000 are available for those living in owner occupier homes to fully cover the costs of improvements such as wall and loft insulation. Those living in rented homes can also receive 2/3 (or up to £5,000) of the total costs of efficiency improvements, with their landlord needing to contribute a minimum of 1/3 of overall costs.
- 5.18 This funding has been made available through the Government's Green Homes Grant LAD scheme phase 2. Further information can be found at www.colchester.gov.uk/greenhomesgrantlad2. Residents who think they might be eligible to the scheme should fill in a referral form on the Warmworks website (www.warmworks.co.uk/greenhomesgrant), or call Warmworks on 0808 196 8255. Alternatively, please get in contact with the Council by emailing climate.change@colchester.gov.uk, or calling 01206 508965.

- 5.19 Essex County Council have recently launched a [Climate Action Challenge Fund](#) pot for communities to bid into to carry out projects that tackle a climate related challenge. Community groups, charities and schools amongst others can bid for funding of up to £20,000 and is open until March 31, 2022 or until funds last. Further information about the fund and its guidelines can be found [here](#). This information has been circulated with Community 360, Town and Parish Clerks and all councillors.
- 5.20 The Council has been working on its communications plan around its response to the climate emergency to ensure residents remain informed about this and can take their own action to live more environmentally friendly lifestyles. Recently during the duration of the Conference of Parties 26 (COP26) in Glasgow, the Council put out several focussed communications to link in with this campaign. Some of these are copied below for information.



Figure 1: Highlights of the Council's action in response to the climate emergency between July 2020 and July 2021



Figure 2: Social media post about the retrofit works that will be taking place at Rowan House



Figure 3: Social media post encouraging residents to make simple changes to reduce their environmental impact. This post was to encouraging reducing use of single-use plastics.

5.21 For further information on updates in the Climate Emergency Action Plan, see appendix 2.

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. Actions and projects highlighted in the report all have co-benefits outside of environmental improvements for residents.
- 14.2 For example, delivering more energy efficient homes for residents helps to reduce their fuel bills and ensuring their homes are kept warm improving their health and wellbeing.
- 14.3 Promoting responsible burning, walking and cycling, and no-idling all have positive impacts on people's health through improvements in air quality. Supporting residents to use electric vehicles, as well as using electric vehicles for Council operations, will support improvements in air quality and contribute to reductions in noise pollution.
- 14.4 Additionally, providing the opportunity for residents to plant trees and get outside in green spaces helps to promote physical activity and improved health.