

17th December 2020

Report of	Assistant Director of Environment	Author	Ben Plummer and Maggie Ibrahim ☎ 508965
Title	Climate Emergency Action Plan – Progress Update		
Wards affected	Not applicable		

1. Executive Summary

1.1 This report details key progress made with the Climate Emergency Action Plan, and other relevant updates since the previous meeting on 29th October 2020.

1.2 Key elements of progress are:

- Community & Staff Engagement Strategy draft developed
- An MoU has been created for the One Colchester sub-group on climate change
- A draft survey has been produced to understand resident's attitudes and preferences for actions in relation to climate change
- A behaviour change challenge for staff has been developed – Hero for Zero
- Made bid for a £528,250 grant from Salix Finance to decarbonise and increase the energy efficiency of Rowan House.
- Developing scope of new Carbon Management Plan
- Decision taken to procure Electric Vehicles (EVs) and hybrids as phase one of the fleet transition plan.

Other Updates:

- Interim report produced by Essex Climate Action Commission and reviewed by CBC staff
- Planting dates agreed and tree seed nursery set up for Woodland and Biodiversity Project
- Submission of Town Deal bid
- Agreement to adopt Positive Parking Strategy
- Agreement to assign £4.4m to decarbonise the Council's housing stock
- Exploring Grants: i.e. Economic Development & Active Living Fund
- Exploring a potential collaboration with QGO, a start up e-mobility business, in partnership with the University of Essex.

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

5.1 Each of the updates will be covered in turn relating to several key areas of action related to the action plan.

Community and Staff Engagement

5.2 Several actions have been progressed regarding engagement around the climate emergency declaration. These are summarised below:

5.3 A draft Community and Staff Engagement Strategy around the climate emergency has been developed in order to hear from residents and staff as well as encourage behaviour change. The actions below are a beginning to operationalise the strategy.

5.4 A memorandum of understanding (MoU) has been created setting out the proposed purpose and governance of the One Colchester Climate Change Network. This is being brought for discussion on the agenda of the next One Colchester Strategic Board meeting.

5.5 A survey is being drafted to understand resident attitudes and behaviours in relation to climate change and environmental issues. It will also explore resident priorities and preferences for action to reduce the environmental impact of Council operations and behaviours across the borough. Continued liaison with the Council's research and external communications team is taking place in the design of this survey. The proposed questions will be trialled with the new 'Speak up now' staff group to get their opinions on it also. We plan to launch the survey at the end of January 2021.

5.6 Other methods for community engagement have also been explored in further detail, to understand how other Councils have used them and their costs.

5.7 The Council and the University of Essex will be jointly delivering a project with two schools in Colchester, focussed around increasing the environmental awareness of staff, pupils and parents. The project will take place between January-June/July 2021 and will be fully funded by the Local Government Association (LGA) and University College London (UCL).

5.8 A Hero for Zero Challenge has been created to encourage staff behaviour change and cross service collaboration and wellbeing. Staff will sign up to commit to a behaviour change or to reward a colleague through skills sharing (i.e. cooking a recipe, orienteering, etc.) The launch of the challenge will be in January and last for 2 months.

Rowan House

5.9 The Council has made a bid to the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme administered by Salix Finance for £528,250 to increase the energy efficiency of and decarbonise Rowan House. If received the money will be spent on:

- An air source heat pump to replace the current gas boiler which will lower emissions associated with heating the building.
- A mechanical ventilation and heat recovery (MVHR) system to circulate fresh air throughout the building. This will ensure Rowan House is covid-safe and will reduce

heat loss from windows being open which is how circulation of fresh air occurs in the building currently.

- Increasing roof insulation in the building to reduce heat loss
- Replacing external and internal lighting with LED bulbs to save electricity in the building

Carbon Management Plan

- 5.10 The scope of new Carbon Management Plan with the CBC Climate Challenge and Sustainability Project Board and the Carbon Trust has been developed. The scope of the CMP will be a three-year plan, instead of the previous 5 years. This is recommended as technology and investment through the central UK government will provide new opportunities for the Council to reduce its emissions. However, the plan will also look towards 2030, setting key milestones and a pathway for carbon reduction between now and 2030. Options on emissions offsetting will also be included to demonstrate how CBC could offset its emissions locally.

Housing updates

- 5.11 £4.4m of additional budget estimate was agreed to be spent on the Housing Improvement Climate Emergency Response works at a Cabinet meeting on 23rd November 2020. These works will be focussing on decarbonising the housing stock, taking actions such as replacing boilers, installing external wall insulation and increasing the energy efficiency of over 100 energy inefficient homes. Part of these works may also be able to be funded through the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund grant from Government. The grant would provide approximately £500k towards the works and the Council is due to hear in December 2020 whether it has been successful in receiving this.

Woodland and Biodiversity Project Update

- 5.12 The Council marked National Tree Week (28th November – 6th December) by planting 145 trees across the borough. Tree planting dates for the public were revised due to the Covid-19 lockdown in November and are now taking place in January and February with the first taking place on the 9th January at the Mayor's Wood. Several other parish and town councils will be planting trees in December and January as part of the project. These sites have been reviewed by the Colchester Natural History Society to ensure that tree planting taking place on these sites is suitable, considering the wildlife habitats present on the sites.
- 5.13 The tree seed nursery at the Big Garden in Highwoods is ready to use and will enable the Council to grow trees from seed to use in future years of the project.

Fleet Transition Plan

- 5.14 On 23 November 2020, Cabinet agreed that it would be operationally and financially viable to initiate the first phase of transition to a low carbon fleet, by agreeing the recommendation to procure 15 EV's, 4 hybrid and 2 diesel vehicles, from a fleet of 21 small fleet vehicles. The plan for transition of CBCs fleet to full EV by 2030 is set out in more detail in the Fleet Transition Forward Plan due for discussion at Panel on the 17th Dec.

Other updates

Essex Climate Action Commission

- 5.14 Essex Climate Action Commission is an independent, cross-party commission with the purpose of providing recommendations for actions on climate change mitigation and adaptation in Essex that is informed by expert advice. The Commission will be considering actions on six themes: Adapting to an already changing climate, Transport, The built environment, Energy and Waste, Land use and green infrastructure and Community Engagement.
- 5.15 The Commission have produced an interim report which summarises recommendations already made from the Commission on the first three themes.
- 5.16 Key long term recommendations made in the report include:
- All new homes and new commercial buildings granted planning permission to be net zero from 2025, and all new schools commissioned to be net zero from 2022.
 - 2/3 of homes should be retrofitted to net zero standards by 2030
 - Introduce 20 low traffic neighbourhoods per annum from 2022-2030
 - Introduce school streets for 25 schools by 2022, and an additional 20 per year to 2050
- 5.17 The Commission also recognised 'good practice' in each of the three themes that is and will continue to be taking place in the short term, some of which will affect Colchester. These include:
- Introduce school streets for 25 schools by 2022 – Some of these will be present in Colchester, for example along Lexden Road as part of tranche 2 of the Safer, Greener, Healthier infrastructure.
 - Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) as the default in all new developments
- 5.18 Feedback to the Commission will be given upon review by the report in the new Climate Challenge and Sustainability Project Board. A draft response on recommendations that CBC supports has been developed.
- 5.19 The Positive Parking Strategy that was presented at the previous Environment and Sustainability Panel has now been formally adopted at Cabinet.
- 5.20 Essex County Council was successful in receiving £7,358,700 in tranche 2 of the Government's Active Travel Fund. Some of this will be going towards implementing infrastructure improvements in Colchester such as school streets and segregated cycle lanes. Detailed design on the north-south and east-west cycling and walking routes are now in place, involving the BID, Colchester Cycling Campaign, Walk Colchester and the blind and partially sighted group. Consultation with other stakeholders will then take place in January and February.
- 5.21 The Town Deal bid was submitted in October 2020 and the Council is now awaiting to hear before February 2021 whether the £25m bid has been successful. The bid contained many elements that align with the climate emergency, such as the creation of school streets, improving cycling links between the University and Greenstead with the town centre and installing secure cycle parking.
- 5.22 The Council is currently exploring the use of the Economic Development and Active Living Fund (ED&ALF). The ED&ALF is being explored through the Economic Development Team with Essex County Council as a lead and CBC as a potential partner.

- 5.23 The Council has recently been having conversations with QGO about developing a proposal for an ebike hire scheme in partnership with the University of Essex (UoE). QGO are a start-up business based at the UoE, who are keen to provide electric mobility solutions that focus on-demand transport solutions, considering the most efficient ways to move people and goods around.

6. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

- 6.1 In regard to community engagement, we are ensuring that as many residents as possible will have the opportunity to contribute their thoughts about the climate emergency.
- 6.2 We will be reaching out to members at One Colchester to help us with the communication about the survey to residents. Additionally, we will be asking councillors to help with getting responses to the survey, including any responses they want to give themselves based on their own opinion, and also of residents which they have spoken to before.

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 regard to community engagement, we plan to launch the survey for a month to allow as many residents to contribute their opinions. These will then be collated, and presented back to the Environment and Sustainability Panel and uploaded to the Council's sustainability webpage.

9. Publicity Considerations

- 9.1 There are no publicity considerations.

10. Financial implications

- 10.1 The potential awarding of the grant for the decarbonisation of Rowan House means that £500,000 set aside in the capital programme for these works could be saved.

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 health and safety implications.

14. Environmental and Sustainability Implications

- 14.1 The updates mentioned in this report all relate to the climate emergency declaration, and will us to positively respond to this through works to decarbonise corporate buildings or to provide greater understanding of resident opinions and priorities around tackling environmental issues in Colchester.